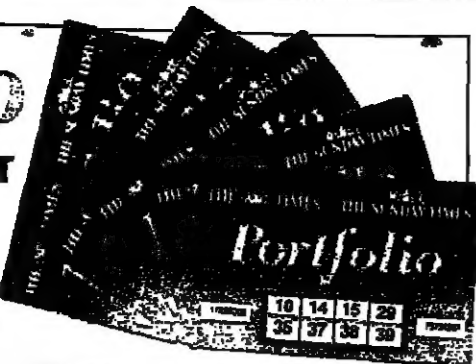


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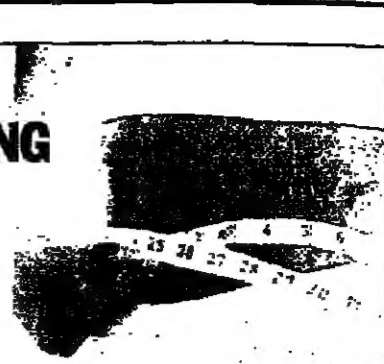
BEST FOR BOOKS

Why Martin Amis lacks heart, by Russell Celyn Jones PAGE 42



THE PERIL OF SLIMMING PILLS

Dr Thomas Stuttford PAGE 20



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Alarm over fall in convictions

Rape victims may get new deal in court

By Stewart Tandler and Richard Ford

RAPE victims may be allowed to give evidence from behind screens and be spared grueling cross-examination as part of a drive to bring more sex attackers to justice.

Police, MPs and women's groups are all pressing the Home Secretary to act after figures released yesterday showed that far more women are being raped, but far fewer men are being tried or convicted.

The number of rapes reported to police has trebled over the past 12 years to just under 6,000 in 1996 — and some officers say that is a massive underestimate, with only one in ten victims thought to come forward. But the number of prosecutions and convictions has fallen, so that only 19 per cent of complaints lead to a court case — and only half of those end with a conviction.

More than one hundred MPs, many of them Labour backbenchers, have now signed a Commons motion calling for sweeping changes to court procedures and Jack Straw has promised to consider reforms.

He said yesterday that he was extremely concerned by the figures, which indicated that the sea-change in the way police investigated rape complaints had not been fully reflected by the courts or the legal profession.

There is a great deal to do to make the system better and more sensitive to the needs of the victim. More needs to be done to protect witnesses in court. We have to get away

from the hostile environment. Victims have already suffered one trial with the rape itself.

Mr Straw said that screening victims from their alleged attackers was one possibility.

Another was to curtail the often lengthy cross-examination of victims about their previous sexual history: the Home Secretary wants to ensure that such questioning is allowed only if strictly relevant.

Two studies are already underway in an attempt to tackle the problem. The Home Office is following more than 500 cases from the first complaint to the court case in an effort to raise the standard of evidence against suspects and improve the environment for victims and other vulnerable witnesses.

At the same time, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the judiciary are examining how the present system operates and how various departments co-operate.

Nigel Pascoe, QC, chairman of the Bar's public affairs committee, said he backed an overhaul of the rape laws — including screens to surround victims or allowing them to give evidence by video link — so long as they still allowed vigorous cross-examination. "Times have changed. Today we extend much greater protection to victims of sexual assault," he said.

But any such changes are likely to prove controversial with civil liberties groups, which argue that allowing screens around a victim giving

evidence is a further erosion of a fundamental part of the legal process.

John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights pressure group, said: "The difficulty with this is where are we going to draw the line. There may be a number of steps that need to be taken to protect vulnerable witnesses, but there is a fundamental right of trial in the open where the defendant can confront his or her accuser. That should not be given away lightly."

The case for reform was presented vividly yesterday by a victim who waived her anonymity to address the Police Superintendents' Association conference in Bristol.

Sinisa Vig, who was left pregnant after being attacked by a family friend, asked why the courts "cannot be civilised to someone who has been through the most terrible experience of their lives. I felt I was on trial."

After she spoke, the association overwhelmingly backed a motion calling for radical reform to help rape victims in court, and to stop serial date-rapists walking free. One detective told the conference that Scotland Yard knew of up to ten such men preying on women in London. Detective Superintendent Bill Graham said that they befriended women in bars and clubs with a premeditated view to rape confident that they would never be convicted. "I know of a handful of these date-rapists who offend over and over again."



Shirley Wigginton: forced to booby-trap her home against former boyfriend

Rejected lover in military stake-out

By Stephen Farrell

A FORMER Army engineer suspended for two years and ordered to pay £200 compensation at Nottingham Crown Court after he admitted causing actual bodily harm between March and June last year.

Judge Alistair McDuff, QC, described his conduct as "wicked and threatening", but said he suspended the sentence because Payne had moved out of the area and changed his behaviour.

The sentence was last night attacked by Mrs Wigginton, a widow and mother of two children. She said: "It's like he has been allowed to walk away. He's probably laughing about it. Despite everything he's done to me, he hasn't had to pay for any of it. I still break down and get depressed."

The court heard the couple came together after her husband died, and they

bought a house together. However, the relationship soured because of Payne's violent temper and by February 1996 she had obtained two injunctions and a county court order to remove him. He finally left but began to stalk out the house, threatening her children and running through the back garden wearing a balaclava mask.

Last night Mrs Wigginton, who has only recently stopped taking tranquillisers, told how she was so scared that she asked a close friend to move in with her.

They turned the home into a virtual fortress, barricading themselves in at night with saucapans balanced on top of the ironing board against the back door.

A charge of burglary at Mrs Wigginton's home was ordered to lie on the file.

Payne, 43, was yesterday sentenced to two years in jail

Clinton rejects landmine treaty

By Our Foreign Staff

WASHINGTON yesterday refused to sign a treaty banning landmines. A draft version had been approved in Oslo earlier in the day.

Defending the decision, President Clinton said America could not sign an agreement that failed to accept the special responsibilities of the world's only superpower. "Unfortunately, as it is drafted, I cannot in good conscience add America's name," he said.

The sticking point for Washington is Korea. With only 37,000 Americans supporting South Korean troops against

hundreds of thousands of North Korean forces across the border, the President argued that America was justified in keeping anti-tank and anti-personnel mines in the peninsula.

America wants a nine-year exemption from the treaty for Korea. It also wants states to be allowed to withdraw from the treaty if they are attacked.

Robin Cook last night welcomed the accord, describing it as the beginning of the end for landmines. "This achievement is due in part to the work of Diana, Princess of Wales, who did so much to focus the attention of the world on the horrific effects of anti-personnel landmines," the Foreign Secretary said. Britain would continue to urge as many countries as possible to sign the treaty, he added.

Global ban, page 16

Job figures raise interest rate fear

Financial markets are braced for further interest rate rises after statistics showed unemployment at a 17-year low and the high street spending boom continuing.

Unemployment fell to 1.496,500 — 5.3 per cent of the workforce — in August, the lowest since 1980. Retail sales rose 0.4 per cent, the same rate as in July, although the annual rate slipped from 6.7 per cent to a still robust 5.6 per cent. Pages 23, 27

Unionists revive peace process

Ulster Unionists revived the peace process by returning to Stormont for the first time since Sinn Féin was admitted to the talks.

Declaring that republican terrorists would not drive his Ulster Unionist Party from the process, David Trimble broke one of unionism's taboos by marching his delegation into the same building as Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. Page 2

Paxman denounces 'sausage machine' BBC news

By Raymond Snoddy and Carol Midgley



LEADING BBC presenter yesterday added their weight to editors, producers and journalists in opposing plans to abolish individual editorships for news programmes. Jeremy Paxman, the Newsnight presenter now on leave to write a book, said yesterday that the plan to create centralised news teams would turn the BBC News operation into a "sausage machine".

All producers and presenters of Radio 4's flagship Today programme, including Anna Ford, John Humphrys, James

Naughtie, Sue MacGregor and Nick Clarke, presenter of the World at One, plus Robin Lustig and James Cox have signed a letter describing the changes as "unacceptable".

The letter will go to Richard Clegg, head of BBC news programmes who announced the changes to staff on Tuesday — changes that will see four executive editors take over responsibility for blocks of news programming. Associate editors will have responsibilities for a number of individual programmes and a fifth executive editor will have responsibility for commissioning features across the entire

radio and television news output. The feature commissioner's budget will come from the individual programmes.

Austin Mitchell, the Labour MP and broadcaster said last night the changes were "a dog's dinner" and "further BBC insanity". He was referring to John Birt the BBC Director-General.

"This is putting all news into the Birtian Kenwood mixer. The Nine O'Clock News will simply be a reshuffled version of the 24-hour television news rather than the way it was around."

Mr Mitchell said last night plans to raise the issue in

Parliament, and write to both the BBC Governors and Chris Smith, the Culture, Media and Sports Secretary.

A former senior member of the BBC board of management, who asked not to be named, said yesterday that the plan meant the BBC would be "producing news like extruded plastic. You just break off a bit."

One senior editor who has decided not to apply for one of the new executive editor posts said yesterday that he had seen BBC financial projections showing that in between two and three years the amount of

Continued on page 2, col 6

Princess's car may have hit Fiat before fatal crash

By Ben Macintyre in Paris and Alan Hamilton

THE Mercedes in which Diana, Princess of Wales, made her final journey may have hit another car before crashing into a concrete pillar in a Paris tunnel, French police said yesterday.

Fragments of the plastic brake light from a Fiat Uno have been found close to pieces of the Mercedes's headlamp and wing mirror within a hundred yards of the crash site. Scientists also believe that a scratch along the limousine's right wing may have been caused by an earlier collision.

A number of unidentified witnesses have told police that they saw a second car driving through the tunnel which sped away after the crash that killed the Princess, her friend Dodi Fayed and her driver Henri Paul. But police still believe that there is only a "slim possibility" that another vehicle was involved, and it seems strange that a small car hit with enough force to shatter lights on both cars was able to continue its journey while the Mercedes spun out of control.

The Fiat shards found in the tunnel may have been the remnants of an unconnected accident. But that would not explain the presence of the glass from the Mercedes headlamp so far ahead of the pillar.

The debris is being examined in a laboratory which should be able to establish the exact make, model, colour, year and place of production of the cars from which they came. That could, however, take weeks and in the meantime, police hope to learn more from the bodyguard who survived the crash.

Trevor Rees-Jones took his first steps since the accident yesterday and he is expected to be interviewed by the investigating magistrate Hervé Stéphan tomorrow.

□ The Queen is to take the Princess's place at a London

concert that was intended as a gala but will now become a memorial event.

Buckingham Palace said that the Queen had been delighted to accept the invitation to be guest of honour at the Festival Hall on November 12 for an event to mark the 175th anniversary of the Royal Academy of Music and raise funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children.

The Queen is patron of both institutions and the Princess was president of both — although she relinquished her position with the academy after her divorce, when she gave up about a hundred charity posts.

Sir Colin Davis will conduct a programme of Mozart that has been changed to reflect the memorial nature of the concert.

Editors' pledge

Senior newspaper editors promised at a meeting of the Press Complaints Commission's code committee to support rigorous privacy reforms and to help to put an end to the "deplorable practices" by some members of the press after the Princess's death. Page 5

A violin concerto and the Symphony No 36 have been dropped in favour of his Requiem, but the Sinfonia Concertante and Kyrie remain.

Palace officials dismissed any suggestion that the Queen's attendance was part of an effort to heal supposed rifts between with her former daughter-in-law, but it will be seen as a gesture of solidarity. □ Earl Spencer had a 30-minute meeting with the Prime Minister at Downing Street yesterday. No details were released, but it is assumed that he used the occasion to renew his call for a new privacy law.

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'Greedy' Sugar forced me out, says Venables

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

TERRY VENABLES, the former England football coach, told a jury yesterday that he was driven out of Tottenham Hotspur by the lies and greed of his partner, Alan Sugar, chairman of the North London club.

Mr Venables said that he then lost his England job because events had made the international committee nervous of retaining him.

After the 1991 takeover by the two men of the club, which had debts of £16 million, profits of £3 million and £5 million were made in the next two years.

After that Mr Sugar, the Amstrad tycoon, decided he wanted it all to himself. Mr Venables said. Describing the collapse of their relationship which led to his departure in 1993, Mr Venables told Knightsbridge Crown Court: "He just got big eyes, got greedy and wanted the lot."

Mr Venables, who became chief executive of Spurs after the takeover, was giving evidence on behalf of his business associate, Edward Ashby, who is accused of serving the club as a £17,000-a-year general manager while an undischarged bankrupt.

In an action brought by the Department of Trade and Industry, Mr Ashby, 53, denies four counts of being involved in managing the club, two of its subsidiary companies and the London nightclub, Scribes West, owned by Mr Venables.

The prosecution maintains that he hired and fired staff and was involved in management decisions, but Mr Ashby claims that he was merely Mr Venables' "glorified secretary".

Mr Venables said that Mr Ashby was only ever an assistant and that he did not know that Spurs notepaper bore the title "general manager" in letters written by Mr Ashby. "I ran the show myself," he said.

Mr Venables also denied knowing that Mr Ashby was responsible for preparing a business plan for the club in 1991 presented to the board after the takeover. The case continues today.



Midge Mather outside yesterday's hearing. She told the police: "I want to go to court. I wasn't flogging my guts out for two hours and a half hours for nothing"

The ringing confession

Angry villager, 64, sabotaged church bells then telephoned police and councillors to say that she did it. Simon de Bruxelles reports

THERE was no doubt about the culprit when someone broke down the heavy oak door of a 12th-century village church and cut the bell ropes with a hacksaw. Midge Mather, 64, personally telephoned every member of the parochial church council to tell them what she had done, and then called the police.

Tired of the noise from the bells of St Swithun's in Compton Bassett, Wiltshire, she wanted everyone to know of her protest, and even offered to leave a light switched on outside her cottage so that police could find their way to arrest her. She was disappointed when officers said that initially they would just make a report.

"But look, I want to go to court," she told them. "Come off it, I wasn't flogging my guts out for two hours and a half hours for nothing."

A tape recording of the telephone call was played yesterday as Mrs Mather had

her wish, appearing before Chippenham magistrates accused of causing criminal damage worth £1,852.25 to the 500-year-old door and six bell ropes. She is defending herself, claiming that she acted under duress and had no choice because the noise was placing the life of her brother, John, in danger.

She had broken down the door with a crowbar, clambered on a box balanced on a chair and cut the bell ropes with a hacksaw. In her phone call, she said: "Is that the police? My name is Mrs Mather and I think you ought to come out and arrest me. I have just cut the bells at my church and smashed the door down. I will put the outside light on so you can find me."

I've asked for meetings and meetings and I've got nothing.

"The only thing I could do was take it into my hands. My brother could have done it himself but of course it would have killed him. He was blown up on D-Day. He was a commando."

"I had to clamber over the door. One time I got stuck because I'm a bit fat, but I managed it in the end. I've been up and cut six ropes. I've had to stand on a box at 64 years of age, wobbling like hell, but I managed it."

Mrs Mather arrived at court wearing a black pillbox and veil, and carrying a 5ft tubular building prop wrapped in a red gingham tea towel. The pole was identical

to one used to block the door to the belltower after Mrs Mather had threatened to sabotage a visit by a group of campanologists from Oxfordshire.

Guy Knell, for the prosecution, said that until Mrs Mather began complaining several years ago, groups from all over the country would come to ring them. The number of visits was cut and efforts were made to warn her in advance of bellringing sessions.

He said: "The church authorities have done their best to try to accommodate Mrs Mather over the bellringing. They are people normally used to dealing in terms of peace and understanding. There have been times when Mrs Mather's rather confrontational approach has left them rather nonplussed."

Mrs Mather said that she had never been invited to discuss the problem with the church council despite numerous complaints, and had not been informed the ringing was being cut back. But John Reis, secretary of the church council, said the reason no one had told her was because "unfortunately your calls were long and ranting and it was impossible for the recipient to get a word in edgewise."

Dr David Bishop, captain of the bells, said he arranged for the steel bar to be placed behind the bellry door after she had made threats in the local newspaper. The ropes were tied out of reach and the safety rope to the stairs was

removed. Mrs Mather asked him whether it had been his intention that "I should fall and break my neck". Dr Bishop, a GP, replied: "The intention was to stop you going up in the first place."

The hearing threatened to descend into farce when George Calvert, an elderly war veteran and former judge's clerk helping Mrs Mather with her case, muttered to a witness: "You are arrogant, sir."

After being admonished by the magistrate, he said: "I won't be intimidated by anyone" and resigned as legal adviser, to be replaced by Mrs Mather's daughter, Rebekah Sloane-Mather. Mr Calvert was later taken into custody after shouting at the magistrate, who had told Mrs Mather to sit down when she complained that she was not being allowed to summon several witnesses, including the Bishop of Salisbury.

The case continues today.

JP who exposed bottom loses her seat

By FRANCES GIBBS
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A MAGISTRATE who was photographed exposing her bottom has been told by the Lord Chancellor that she may no longer sit on the bench. Josie Lewis has been told that her "mooning" failed to uphold "the dignity, standing and good reputation" of the magistracy.

Her dismissal from the Swindon Bench comes after an incident in April when she bared her backside at Brian Woodfield, a stable owner. Miss Lewis, 45, had been collecting some property from the stables at Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, when she became involved in an argument with Mr Woodfield and dropped her breeches at him as she left.

He already had his camera out to take pictures of the tackle she was removing as she had not signed an inventory, and got a photograph of her bottom. She has now been sent a letter by Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, telling her that she can no longer sit as a Justice of the Peace.

Miss Lewis, a freelance publicist and journalist, said: "My future work commitments would not have left me available to sit anyway. There are other ways I can help in the community. I have never met anybody who has ever condemned me for it. They have all treated it as quite light-hearted. I do not see any reason why I should have resigned. If the Lord Chancellor has made this decision, then there's nothing I can do."

Mr Woodfield said: "I think it's for the best. She should have resigned long ago. It's not fitting for someone who can send people to jail to act in such a manner. I'm sure if she had sat on a case where someone had mooned she would have taken a very dim view."

Honeymoon couple survive balloon crash in Mexico

By PHILIP DELVES
BRIGHTON

A BRITISH couple on honeymoon in Mexico survived after they fell 2,500ft when a hot air balloon they were travelling in ripped open and caught fire.

David and Vicky Martin looked up just minutes after lifting off from the resort of Puerto Vallarta to see the balloon tearing open above them and then bursting into flames. The six passengers and pilot dropped to the ground at a speed of more than 40mph.

"Everybody was laughing and joking as we got up in the air, saying 'We must be mad doing this'," Mr Martin, 30, from Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, said. "Then I looked up and saw the balloon had ripped all the way around about halfway up and I could see the sky through the hole."

"The pilot had told us because the balloon was patchwork it was not supposed to rip. I just thought 'Oh my God we are going to die, this can't be happening'."

The balloon caught fire and the passengers, all honeymoon couples, were told to crouch down to avoid being burnt. Mr Martin said: "It was the hardest thing in the world not being able to hold my wife's hand while all this was happening. Every time I close my eyes now I see the ground coming up towards



David and Vicky Martin on their wedding day

me. Vicky said to me 'We're going to die, aren't we?'"

As they hit the ground he and the other passengers crawled clear of the wreckage and he heard his wife crying out that she could not move her legs. He said: "She thought she had broken her back and asked me if I would still love her if she was in a wheelchair for the rest of her life."

The pilot then shouted to Mr Martin to pull his wife clear as the balloon's fuel tanks could explode at any

minute. "We pulled her out between us. She was in so much pain that she was screaming."

Mrs Martin, 29, had a four-hour operation for a badly dislocated spine while Mr Martin, 30, escaped with just a swollen ankle. Four standards of nursing in the Mexican hospital to which they were transported meant a further 12 days were added to their stay. Mr Martin had to feed and wash his wife himself. The other passengers and the pilot were unhurt. Mrs Martin's

surgeons told her that her survival was amazing.

The accident took place ten days into the couple's two-week stay when they decided to take an excursion organised with two other honeymooning couples.

Since returning to England, the couple have been treated at the King's Mill Hospital in Sutton in Ashfield where they both work. Mr Martin as an accountant and Mrs Martin as a clerical assistant.

Mr Martin said: "We have hardly had a chance to think about the wedding. It seems like a lifetime ago. We feel lucky to be alive. Vicky is still upset about the whole thing, but I have told her that at least one thing has come out of all of this: there is now a bond between us that no one can break."

Mexican authorities are investigating the accident. The balloon in which the Martins were flying was only a few weeks old and had been given a safety check. The pilot had been flying balloons for 18 years.

David and Vicky Martin booked their holiday to Puerto Vallarta through the First Choice travel firm. They were fully insured through their own company.

Balloon trips at Puerto Vallarta have been temporarily suspended by First Choice until they find what caused the Martins' balloon to break up.

Left-handers from outer space

THERE may be a good reason why left-handed people were once treated with suspicion. Their peculiarity could be a betrayal of extraterrestrial origins, according to research published today.

Scientists know that amino acids — the building blocks of life from which proteins are made — come in two molecular types, known as "left-handed" and "right-handed". For living things to function, they must be based on only one of these types: they cannot be mixed together. And on Earth, left-handed amino acids were selected.

Scientists have wondered whether

er nature picked the left-handed form at random, or whether there is something about the universe that favoured this form. Now a new study of a meteorite that landed in Australia in 1969 suggests that the origins are extra-terrestrial.

Before there was life on Earth there were amino acids, and it is believed that many were carried here by comets and meteorites. So any evidence that the amino acids found in meteorites have a preponderance of the left-handed form would indicate that the bias was set long before life began to evolve, by some force acting early in the history of the uni-

verse. Earlier examination of the Murchison meteorite have suggested that its amino acids do show an excess of the left-handed form. But this had been dismissed as the result of accidental contamination as the meteorite was studied.

In the new research, Dr Michael Engel, of the University of Oklahoma, and Dr S.A. Macko, of the University of Virginia, have examined the ratio of nitrogen isotopes in the amino acids from the Murchison meteorite and report in *Nature* that they are enriched in nitrogen-15, a clear signal of extraterrestrial origin.

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Opponents join forces against Welsh apathy

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT AND NICHOLAS WATT

JOHN PRESCOTT and William Hague both tried to invigorate the Welsh devolution campaign yesterday amid signs that apathy could be a factor in the outcome of today's referendum on the creation of a Welsh assembly.

The Deputy Prime Minister, campaigning for a "yes" vote, and the Conservative leader, calling for a "no", descended on the border town of Newport, in Monmouthshire, which has in the past shown little enthusiasm for devolution. The "yes" campaign was buoyant after a crowd cheered Mr Prescott as he told the Welsh people it was decision day and they should "go for it".

In Monmouth, Mr Hague called for a high turnout, saying: "If you still have doubts after the government hype and propaganda from their party machine, you should reject devolution." Brushing off ques-

IE OR NA

Some 2,218,850 voters are registered for today's ballot but, with a third of Welsh voters still undecided, both sides will be campaigning hard to encourage people to vote. Polling stations will be open from 7am until 10pm. Voters will be asked one question: Do you agree there should be a Welsh assembly? They must tick "yes" or "no" (in Welsh "ie" or "na").

tions as to whether his Welsh fiancée, Ffion Jenkins, shared his view, Mr Hague said: "I haven't discussed it with her. I am not entirely sure she is entitled to vote."

In North Wales, unlikely

allies are providing momentum to a vigorous campaign for a "no" vote in the referendum. Business leaders who fear an erosion of their strong links with England have found themselves on the same side as fierce Welsh patriots who dread domination by the industrialised South.

"Yes" campaigners have long feared the strength of the "no" vote in North Wales, and it was not by chance that the Prime Minister made his last campaign stop in Wrexham, near the border. "Yes" campaigners remember the 1979 referendum, when North Wales resoundingly rejected devolution.

Tony Blair's words about the economic benefits of an assembly cut little ice on the North Wales coast where business leaders look to Manchester and Liverpool, an hour's drive away, rather than to

Cardiff, four hours away. David Williams, a banker in Llandudno and chairman of the North Wales Business Club, said: "We feel an affinity with Manchester and Liverpool because of a geographical

and historical reality. That is where we look for investment and business. I fear that an assembly in Cardiff would be very biased to South Wales." Down Llandudno's promenade, a strong "no" supporter,

Silvan Jones, a retired economics lecturer who stood as a Labour parliamentary candidate in 1959, said: "The assembly is a poor version of the parliament offered to the Scots and not worth voting for. It is

an insult." But other patriots in the North will vote "yes" in the hope of unbuckling Wales from the United Kingdom. R. S. Thomas, the Welsh poet and campaigner for independence, said the assembly was

better than nothing. Speaking at his Anglesey cottage, Thomas, 84, said: "We must grasp it even though they have thrown only a few crumbs at us."

Letters, page 23



Stephen Doubler, aged 13, and other supporters of a Welsh assembly await the arrival of John Prescott in Pontypridd market yesterday

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Star school says political dogma has hit progress

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

ONE of the top primary schools in England accused the Government of putting political dogma above pupils' interests yesterday after it was refused permission to build larger premises despite raising half the money for the move.

Shenington Church of England School, a grant-maintained village school of 100 pupils near Banbury, in Oxfordshire, was one of only 15 to achieve the maximum score in the first primary school league tables. It has repeated the feat this summer.

The school long ago outgrew its Victorian building in the heart of the village and even a temporary building in the playground has not prevented overcrowding. But David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, has rejected a plan to sell the site and move to a new building on the outskirts of Shenington.

A letter from the Department for Education and Employment said Mr Blunkett had rejected the £750,000 scheme on grounds of cost and because there were other primary school places available in the area. But Roger Hancock, the chairman of governors, said all the neighbouring schools were full and almost half the cost of the move was being met by the Shenington.

Mr Hancock said: "It could be the writing on the wall for the school because all the indications are that an inspection which took place last week will be critical of our facilities. If we have to cut back our intake, the school

will not be viable and everything we have achieved will be lost."

Tony Baldry, the Conservative MP, is writing to protest at the rejection and is seeking grounds for a legal challenge. "I think this is a shabby, spiteful and shameful decision. The only possible reason is that it is the only grant-maintained school in the county."

Mr Baldry added: "Shenington is about the only primary school in the area that hasn't been refurbished in recent decades. It cannot continue as it is and it has raised the money to do something about it, but now it is the victim of political dogma."

The school has four applicants to every place, but agreed not to expand significantly after church authorities and neighbouring schools lodged objections. Mr Hancock said: "We would not go beyond 110 pupils because we would worry that the ethos of the school would be lost."

Mr Hancock said: "We have a sale agreed for the school and have gone through the details in great detail with the Funding Agency for Schools. We were hoping to be able to move before the end of the school year. But now all our plans are in ruins."

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education and Employment said there was no question of political bias. "The scheme was subject to the same scrutiny as any other. We understand the governors are meeting next week and their response will be considered carefully."

Stress blamed for air errors

By HARVEY ELLIOTT, AIR CORRESPONDENT

AIR traffic controllers claim that they are being subjected to intolerable stress as they try to handle an ever-increasing number of aircraft flying into and over the British Isles.

A recent spate of potentially disastrous near-misses have been blamed on controller error, which many controllers believe, is the result of non-stop pressure at work.

"A few years ago there was a time in every day when the number of aircraft slowed down a bit," Michael Burlyn, of the Guild of Air Traffic Controllers, said. "But today, from the moment the headsets go on, it is non-stop pressure. The peak time for traffic is literally all day."

Despite breaks every two hours, controllers say that they are constantly tired and stressed although shown to be skilled and competent when subjected to official tests. Plans to ease their workload by moving the main air traffic control centre from cramped underground facilities at West

Draxton, to a new air traffic control centre at Farnham have been seriously delayed because of repeated problems with the software of the new computer equipment.

The Civil Aviation Authority said that it has set up a review of the new control centre but must ensure that existing services are maintained. A spokesman said: "We cannot undertake large-scale controller training in the busy summer months. This training will be stepped up as the traffic falls during the autumn."

Meanwhile the number of flights continues to grow. Controllers handled their millionth flight of the year on August 22 — earlier than ever before. The number of controllers has risen from 1,100 to 1,700 in the past five years to cope with extra demand.

Airlines are also aware of the increased problems on the ground and are racing to fit the latest anti-collision devices to their aircraft.

Editors promise to back privacy reform

By CAROL MIDGLEY AND RAYMOND SNOODY

NEWSPAPER editors promised yesterday to support rigorous privacy reforms and help to put an end to the "deplorable practices" by some members of the press after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

At a meeting of the Press Complaints Commission's code of practice committee yesterday, a message was read from the Princess's brother Earl Spencer calling for a privacy law and an end to the "torture" of privacy invasion.

Afterwards Sir David English, chairman of the committee, said he believed future breaches of privacy should be investigated whether there had been a complaint or not.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the PCC, who is urging moves to protect the privacy of Prince William and Prince Harry into adulthood, described the meeting as "very constructive". His proposals, which he outlined to the committee yesterday, were drawn up after discussion

with every national newspaper editor.

He added: "The paparazzi are part of the problem, in the sense that it is the conduct of photographers generally we want to put right."

"Lord Spencer's views are very well known to me. He is very concerned about these issues."

Charles Moore, Editor of The Daily Telegraph and a member of the committee, said Lord Spencer had contacted him on Tuesday and asked him to convey the message.

"The text is private but in general it emphasises the enormous public support for his attack on tabloid intrusion. It called upon us all to uphold the sanctity of privacy and in particular attacked the tabloids."

"He said that to deprive someone of their privacy is a form of torture and the tabloids were the torturers. What he hoped for was that this form of journalism would



Sir David: he called for an end to intrusion

stop. It was a very clear message."

In a statement after the meeting the committee said it was undertaking an "urgent" review of the code.

It said: "The tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, has focused unprecedented public attention on Press intrusion, harassment and respect for privacy. As those charged with

defining the code of practice, which sets the benchmarks for the ethical and professional standards of journalism, we recognise this.

"We are now undertaking an urgent review of the code. As an industry we emphasise the need for the code to be followed not just in the letter but in its full spirit."

"We support Lord Wakeham's calls for wide-ranging and rigorous reforms and recognise that there is a shared determination to rid our publications of practices which we all deplore."

The committee, comprising six national newspaper editors, four from regional papers and one each from Scotland and periodicals.

Sources said the meeting had healed a rift between Sir David English, chairman of the committee, and Mr Moore, who had suggested that Sir David, who is also chairman of Associated Newspapers, was unfit for the post on the committee. They had argued publicly about coverage of the Princess's death and



Lord Wakeham meeting the press yesterday after the committee pledged to end "deplorable practices"

its aftermath. Sir David has told Lord Wakeham, the PCC chairman, that in future breaches of privacy should be investigated whether or not there has been a complaint.

Sir David believes that the Privacy Commissioner should have the right to choose which

cases to investigate. He said he was optimistic that, in future, there would be "a new spirit and a new attitude" in the press and that everybody now realised we have now got to get this done.

The committee's recommendations are expected to be discussed at a full meeting of the Press Complaints Commission next Wednesday. An announcement of changes to the existing code of conduct is expected within a day or two of that meeting.

Football strip blunder gave fans the blues

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

REPLICA football kits are not cheap and those who wear them — young, obsessive small boys or slightly mad older ones — have an extraordinary attention to detail. So when Everton fans discovered that their shirts were not exact replicas of those worn by the players, they cried foul. It transpired, however, that it was the players who were sporting the wrong design.

The outcry began when it appeared, to those who can spot such things, that the stripes on the replica shirts were not the same way up as those on the players' shirts. Calls were made to the club and the manufacturer, Umbro, to complain.

There were fears that a mistake had been made in the production of the shirts, which cost about £50. The fact that a late deal with a sponsor just before the season began had delayed the arrival of the stripes in the shops made it seem all the more likely that there had been a blunder.

There had. But not with the replica shirts. Someone, somewhere had unwittingly sewn in the white and yellow

stripes upside down on the players' kit.

Umbro then faced a race against time to dress the players in the correct shirts for the rest of the season. The club said that the team would be properly attired for their clash with Barnsley on Saturday.

Among those who spotted the mistake was Robert Armstrong, 13. "He was drawing a picture of the kit when he noticed the stripe was a different way up on his," his mother, Bernadette Armstrong, said. "When you pay that amount, you expect an exact replica of what the players are wearing."

A spokesman for Umbro said: "We don't know how this happened but new shirts are being sent to the club."

Everton insisted that staff in the club's commercial department had spotted the difference even before the fans did, when the replica stocks arrived in the club's shop a week before they went on sale. A spokesman said: "Those sold to fans are the correct version. The most important thing is that Everton will be playing in the right shirts on Saturday."



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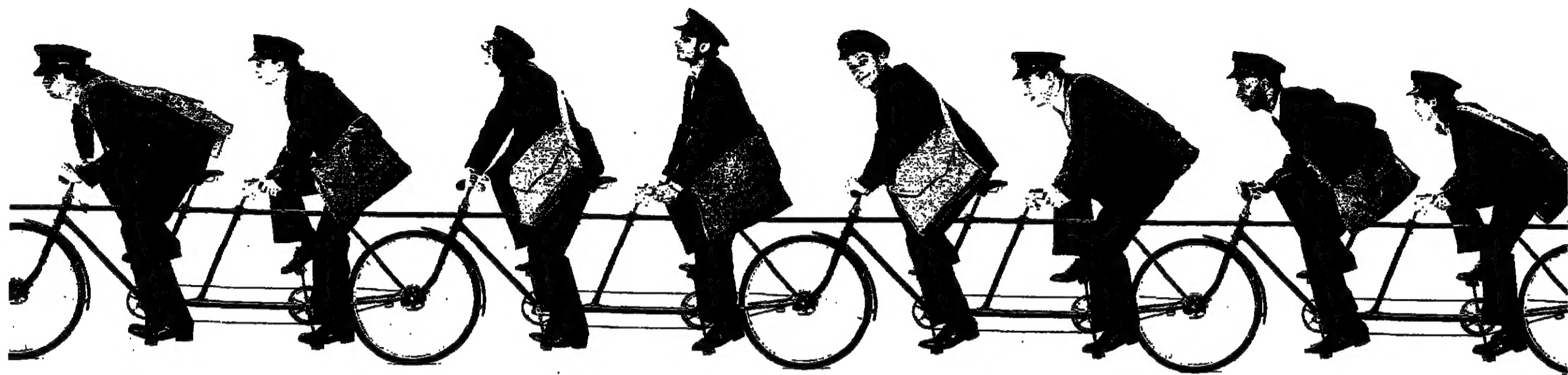
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Briton leads attempt to revive woolly mammoth

A BRITISH scientist is to search for the remains of woolly mammoths beneath the Siberian permafrost in the hope of obtaining genetic material to recreate the extinct species.

David Smale, a British geophysicist, will head an Anglo-Japanese expedition which will use ground-penetrating radar of the kind used by police looking for murder victims as they hunt for mammoths preserved for 40,000 years in the permafrost.

Kazumichi Goto, a veterinary scientist from Kagoshima University in Japan who commissioned the expedition, believes that modern genetic technology might be able to reproduce a woolly mammoth in a similar way to how dinosaurs were recreated in the film *Jurassic Park*.

Dr Goto has found that injecting DNA from the sperm of dead bulls into cows' eggs can produce viable embryos. He wants to employ the same technique to inject DNA from preserved mammoth sperm into the eggs of African elephants. Over successive gen-

Scientists believe they may be able to recreate extinct animal in Jurassic Park style, using sperm from carcass

in permafrost, reports Nick Nuttall

erations, he argues, "purer" mammoths could be bred by fertilising hybrid eggs with more mammoth sperm. The method would effectively breed out the elephant's genetic material.

News of the mammoth hunt was reported in *New Scientist*. Mr Smale, from London consulting engineers Mott MacDonald, recently returned from a preliminary trip to Siberia which was thwarted by Russian customs officials who impounded his equipment.

He hopes to return to the northeastern Siberian republic of Sakha next summer to search for mammoths in permafrost cliffs overlooking the Kolyma river. The region has yielded a number of mam-

moth finds where erosion has exposed their preserved remains.

Mr Smale said yesterday: "Mammoths turn up there with reasonable regularity. In the banks of the rivers in this area you have Pleistocene ice and permafrost dating back more than 30,000 years."

"We'll be looking between five and 20 metres under the surface, which should be well within range. Permafrost is good for radar."

The device, about the size of a lawnmower, is pulled along the ground firing radar pulses into the earth which bounce off hidden objects. The echoes are picked up by detectors on the surface to compute images showing their position.

If a mammoth is found, it

will be excavated by melting the surrounding permafrost with fires and jets of water so as not to harm the carcass. Any sperm extracted will be stored in freezers and returned to Japan.

Dr Goto will be going with Mr Smale, assisted by Peter Lazarev, a mammoth expert from the Museum of the Mammoth in Yakutsk, the nearest major city.

However, Jeremy Austin, a microbiologist from the Natural History Museum in London, who has unsuccessfully searched for DNA in prehistoric insects preserved in amber, believes they cannot succeed. "All that's left of mammoth DNA are shattered little fragments. You are never going to get enough to put all the pieces together."

Adrian Lister, a mammoth expert from University College London, said: "Everything we know about the preservation of DNA in frozen tissue suggests that it is smashed up into fragments." Of six woolly mammoths found frozen, only one found in 1903 had intact genitals.



Sperm taken from preserved mammoths will be injected into elephant eggs

Only the fittest to survive odyssey to Mars

By Nick Nuttall

ASTRONAUTS on a voyage to Mars face even deadlier perils than the explorers on Earth who braved snake bites, scurvy, head-hunters, shipwrecks and other hazards to discover new trading routes and lands.

Researchers assessing the hazards on a trip to the Red Planet have concluded that only the right kind of people would be fitted to survive the journey and the climate of Mars on arrival.

Dangers include killer cosmic rays, cancer, muscle wastage and bone loss from zero gravity, equipment failure, and the very real risk of going mad.

Scientists are busy trying to find ways to minimise the hazards as much as possible. But there is no doubt that a Mars odyssey will be one of the most dangerous feats of human endeavour ever attempted.

The dangers are outlined in the magazine *New Scientist*. The Mars mission is expected to take more than two years — six months to get there, another six to return and 18 months on the planet waiting for the next "launch window".

Cosmic rays will be a major hazard on a long flight so far from Earth. Beyond the Earth's protective atmosphere and magnetic field, atomic nuclei are shooting around like highly charged bullets.

When they strike flesh "they blow biological molecules to bits", said *New Scientist*. They also generate electrons and gamma rays when they hit anything solid.

Solar flares, thrown out by the Sun about once a year, produce huge doses of high energy protons "that would kill unprotected astronauts within hours".

To meet this danger the Mars spaceship would need a protected "storm shelter" where the crew could retreat should a flare occur.

On Mars there would be little protection from cosmic radiation afforded by the planet's thin atmosphere and weak magnetic field. The astronauts would simply have to accept the risk of cancer caused by the total doses of radiation they would be exposed to.

Just as explorers on Earth used to take for granted the risks of snake bite, scurvy, and shipwrecks, interplanetary explorers may have to accept a higher cancer risk as part of the deal, said *New Scientist*.

Beer-belly pill 'will encourage drinking'

By Ian Murray

A PILL derived from kidney beans that is claimed to stop beer drinkers developing a big belly was attacked yesterday for encouraging people to drink.

Nutri-health, which makes the herbal remedy marketed as Beer Blok, says an active ingredient in the beans hinders the body enzyme that turns excess carbohydrates into glucose and fat.

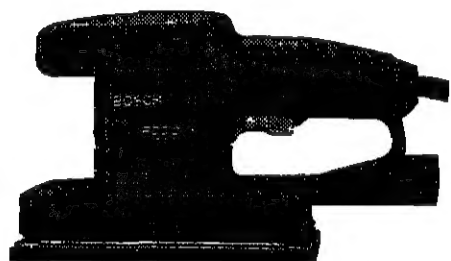
Steve Freak, managing director of the Chichester-based company, said that all a beer drinker had to do to avoid putting on weight was take a pill 15 minutes before the first pint and another before every other round. The company's trials showed that up to 80 per cent of beer drinkers who tried the pill had lost weight.

But a spokesman for Alcohol Concern said that the danger was that people who had reduced consumption because they were worried about putting on weight would think it was now all right to drink as much as they wanted.

"Putting on weight is one of the lesser dangers of drinking large amounts of beer," he said. "There are all sorts of other health risks like liver disease, heart disease and cancer, which are far more serious and this product doesn't address any of these."

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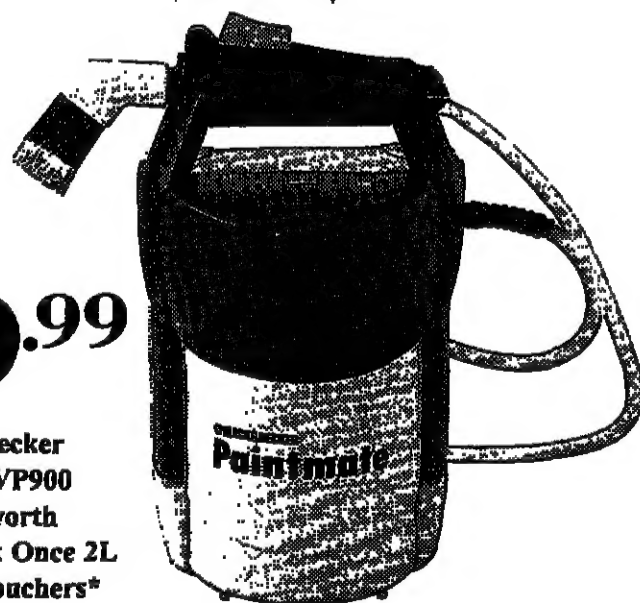
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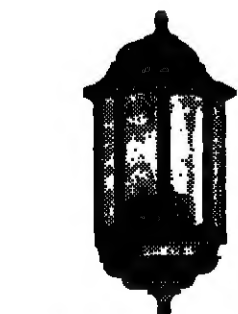


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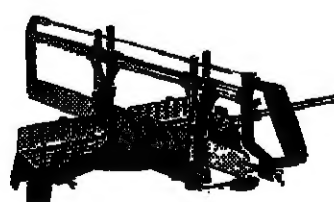


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Adi Roche, Dana and Mary Banotti, whose beliefs span the spectrum of Irish life. Ms Roche is favourite to win

Women-only battle for Irish presidency

THE fight to become the next Irish President turned into a women-only battle yesterday after Albert Reynolds, the former Prime Minister, was rejected by his party in favour of a Belfast academic.

Mary McAleese, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, was the unexpected winner over Mr Reynolds in a secret ballot in Dublin yesterday for the Fianna Fail candidacy. She now takes on three other women, including Dana, the 1970 Eurovision winner, in the battle to succeed Mary Robinson, who resigned last week to become the UN Human Rights Commissioner.

The women span the political spectrum. Dana is a fundamentalist Roman Catholic staunchly opposed to abortion. Adi Roche is a politically correct anti-nuclear campaigner, whose fashionable friends include Bono, singer with the rock band U2. In between are Professor McAleese, who shares some of Dana's religious and anti-abortion sentiments, and Mary Banotti, an MEP with liberal values.

Originally from West Belfast, Professor McAleese, 46, has been secretly lobbying

The defeat of Albert Reynolds means that Ireland's next President will be female. But the candidates' views differ widely, says Audrey Magee

Fianna Fail for some months, but only formally announced her interest two weeks ago when John Hume, the SDLP leader, declined to stand. She had initially been dismissed by the party but gathered backing as the "Anyone but Albert" campaign gained pace. Fianna Fail members were increasingly worried that Mr Reynolds's campaign would be shrouded in allegations of sleaze and that, should Mr Reynolds win, the minority Government would lose a by-election.

Professor McAleese, who is married with three children, said she was "honoured and proud" to stand for Fianna Fail. Ten years ago, she stood unsuccessfully for the party in an election in Dublin. She left politics and concentrated on her academic career, becoming the first Catholic to gain a senior position in Queen's and

becoming the university's first woman pro-vice-chancellor. She studied and lived in Dublin in the 1960s when she lectured at Trinity College and succeeded Mrs Robinson as the university's Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology.

She is known for her staunch Catholicism, supporting the Church's stance on abortion and divorce. But she clashed with the bishops in 1994 when revelations of widespread paedophilia in the Church came to light. Her victory surprised many in Fianna Fail. It is the first time that a former party leader has been rejected as a presidential candidate by the party.

Mr Reynolds said that he was "very disappointed" at his defeat but ruled out standing as an independent. "The party has a democratic right to

make its choice, and I will live with that," he said.

The professor's toughest opponent is Ms Roche, the 42-year-old human rights activist put forward by the Irish left-wing parties. Ms Roche is the bookies' favourite with odds of 6-4 on, compared with 10-1 against Professor McAleese yesterday.

Ms Roche is famed for her work alongside Ali Hewson, Bono's wife, on the Chernobyl Children's Project and is a former Irish Person of the Year. Bono and Mrs Hewson describe Ms Roche as "a great friend" and say they will give as much help to the campaign as possible.

The charity organises holidays in Ireland, Britain and the United States for young victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. It has also dispatched hundreds of tonnes of supplies to the area.

Ms Roche, originally from Tipperary, has a strong record on humanitarian issues. She does not have the professor's intellectual strength or knowledge of constitutional law, which may place her at a disadvantage during the six-week campaign. She was nominated earlier this week by the Irish



Mary McAleese, who beat Albert Reynolds to become Fianna Fail's candidate

Labour Party and quickly backed by the Democratic Left.

Dana, 44, a mother of four, has secured the backing of four county councils to run in the election. She lives in Alabama, the heart of the American Bible Belt, where she hosts a chat show on Mother Angelica, a cable television station, and regularly

sings for the Pope. She will mount a large-scale campaign, with financial backing from anti-abortion groups in Ireland and the United States. Since August the bookies have shortened her odds of securing the presidency from 100-1 to 8-1.

Ms Banotti, 58, is standing for Fine Gael. A nurse turned politician, she is a niece of

Michael Collins, the founding father of the IRA, and sister of Nora Owen, the deputy leader of Fine Gael. She is divorced and brought up her daughter alone.

Before the nominations of the three other women, Ms Banotti was the bookies' favourite to win on October 30, but now she has been eclipsed.

Literacy deputy to head Parole Board

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

USHA PRASHAR, deputy chairman of the National Literacy Trust, was appointed last night to be the next chairman of the Parole Board.

Ms Prashar, 49, will take up the post next month and is expected to bring the board, which considers when prisoners can be released on parole, more into the public eye. Ms Prashar has spent almost all her career working in quangos or voluntary organisations since she joined the Race Relations Board in 1971.

Insiders said yesterday that Ms Prashar's appointment to the Parole Board, which surprised some observers, was linked to the contacts she had made since serving on the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct and her membership of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice. "Membership of those bodies gave her a considerable entrée to the criminal justice system in which she is now well-connected," one source said.

Ms Prashar, who is married without children, came to this country on her own from Kenya as a schoolgirl to study for her O levels at Wakefield Girls' High School in 1964. Leaving the Duchess of Gloucester School in Nairobi and her parents behind, she lived with her late brother in Featherstone, Yorkshire.

Brenda Prashar, her sister-in-law, said: "She is a remarkable person. She arrived in this country on her own to complete her education. It was not easy for people from that background then. It was a strange situation for all of us. It was very difficult."

Within two years of arriving in this country, she was head girl of the Yorkshire direct grant school. She took a degree in political studies at Leeds University followed by a postgraduate diploma in social administration at Glasgow University.

Since then Ms Prashar has held a series of jobs and positions. One source said: "She pops up in a lot of places. Her networks are immensely good."



Prashar: expected to head board in public eye

Government fights human rights violation ruling

Decision on Ulster workers could force change of law, reports Frances Gibb

THE Government is contesting a ruling by the European Commission on Human Rights which says it has violated human rights in Northern Ireland by blocking people who are deemed a security risk from seeking redress in the courts.

The commission unanimously found that in two cases Roman Catholics who were refused public works building contracts on alleged "security risk" grounds had had their human rights breached because they had no way of challenging the decisions.

In both cases, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had issued certificates which effectively blocked the men from mounting claims that they had suffered religious discrimination.

The commission has already referred its finding to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for a final ruling, expected next year. But in a rare move, the

Government has also referred the case to the court, indicating that it intends strongly to contest it, despite its policy to incorporate the human rights convention into law.

In recent months the Government has also referred one other case, tried to refer a second (which fell outside the time limits) and is expected to refer a third.

In the latest case, Patrick and Gerard Tinnelly and their company John Tinnelly & Sons tendered for demolition work with the Northern Ireland Electricity Services. Their tender was the lowest, but they won neither the contract nor a sub-contract.

They lodged a complaint with the Fair Employment Agency (now commission) for Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State then issued a

certificate under section 42 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act that the decision not to award the contract had been on national security grounds, with the effect that they could not pursue their complaint.

In the second case, a contractor submitted the names of Kevin, Michael, Paddy and Barry McDuff as the people he intended to employ on contract works with the Department of Employment in Omagh, Co Tyrone, but security clearance was refused. They too made a complaint under the Fair Employment Act that the refusal of the contract was discriminatory and the Secretary of State likewise issued a certificate barring the tribunal from hearing their claim.

The Tinnellys and the McDuffs say that

the certificates denied them access to a court in violation of the European convention. The courts, they said, should be able to determine whether national security reasons had justified the refusal.

The Government claimed that the restrictions on access to a court were necessary. There was a need, it said, for confidential security vetting in public works contracts.

The contractors' cases were argued by Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC, with the backing of the Fair Employment Commission, which is aware of 50 cases involving certificates, mostly in the public sector, since 1990. Bob Cooper, chairman of the Fair Employment Commission, said: "If the European court follows suit, we shall be looking to the Government to change the

law. We have for a very long time said that the issue of these certificates should be subject to some form of scrutiny."

The procedure was also attacked in June by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights which called for "effective judicial scrutiny of whether an act was in fact done for the purpose of safeguarding national security or of protecting public safety or public order."

Lord Lester brought a previous successful challenge at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg when security certificates were issued to block sex discrimination claims by women part-time reservists in the RUC who were not allowed to be armed. The court held that alleged victims of sex discrimination could not be stopped from having the merits of their cases examined, even where national security was involved. The law had to be modified.

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Bottled water is overpriced con, say rivals

BOTTLED water is an expensive marketing trick and sometimes contains bacteria that make it less healthy than tap water, it was claimed yesterday.

A report from the Water Companies Association, which represents 17 privatised firms, urged the £1 billion bottled water industry to "clean up its act" by reducing prices, reviewing marketing methods and making its packaging and transportation less damaging to the environment. But the British Soft Drinks Association claimed that superior taste and quality was behind bottled water's success.

Pamela Taylor, chief executive of the Water Companies Association, described bottled water as "one of the great cons of the 20th century... It is marketing's answer to the emperor's new clothes."

But Robert Hayward, director-general of the soft drinks association, said: "Consumers buy our products because of their taste, consistency of quality and convenience."

According to the report, bottled water differs little from tap water, but consumers are

A report has called for the industry to clean up its act, reports Joanna Bale

paying "massively over the odds" for it. A litre of tap water costs, on average, 0.07p, while a litre of bottled water costs, on average, 50p. The report said there was no justification for the huge price difference.

According to the report, 66 per cent of bottled water sold in this country is still, as opposed to sparkling. In a *Sunday Times* blind tasting, experts compared five tap waters with five bottled waters. They could not tell the difference between the two: Kent tap water and Evian bottled water scored the highest marks.

The report says that tap water is more closely controlled than bottled water.

"While bacteria levels in bottled water are only regulated for the first 12 hours after bottling, bacteria levels in tap water are controlled right up to the point at which it reaches the consumer."

The report cites a survey by Leeds University last year which found that almost 2 per cent of still bottled water in supermarkets contained sufficient bacteria to fall below national standards. "Once a bottle has been opened, bacteria can grow in the water, unlike tap water, which contains minute quantities of chlorine to protect it. In health terms, leaving out an opened bottle of water is just the same as leaving out a piece of meat."

The report questions the marketing methods used to sell bottle water, with its images of health, sport, and vitality. The British Olympic Association, British Association for Sports Medicine and the British Medical Association saw no advantage in drinking bottled water.

Bottled water damages the environment more than tap water, the report claims, since most plastic bottles end up in landfill sites and are not recycled. Transporting water, particularly imported water, causes toxic fuel emissions, road congestion and noise.

Mr Hayward said that, owing to the introduction of an EU directive, standards of bottled water would improve further. Keeping up quality was expensive, as bottled water companies had to meet tough rules on extraction, hygiene and production, he insisted.

"It seems rather surprising that an industry [tap water] that has had to turn to us on more than one occasion to ensure consumers continue to receive water supplies is now criticising us. One could say that an industry that has had to deal with problems such as cryptosporidium outbreaks, pollution of water supplies from diesel, lead and nitrates, *E.coli* contamination and discoloration, to name but a few, would appear to have more than enough to keep it busy."



Tamara Berton outside the hearing: she claims she was a victim of blind racism

WPC in racism claim 'made string of errors'

By RICHARD DUCE

A JEWISH American trainee policewoman was given a "D for common sense" rating after a series of errors that led to her sacking from the Metropolitan Police, an industrial tribunal was told yesterday.

Tamara Berton was dismissed by a senior officer for trying to call in social services after a mother briefly left her three young children in her car. She was also rebuffed for making an urgent call for assistance after believing she could smell marijuana in a car she had stopped.

Mrs Berton, 50, from Soho, the first Jewish American woman to join the Metropolitan Police, is claiming unfair

dismissal on the grounds of racial discrimination. She says assessment of her work at Belgrave police station was a conspiracy to get her sacked because she was a "stereotypical, loud, brash Yank".

Georgina Kent, for the Metropolitan Police, highlighted other flaws in Mrs Berton's work which led to her dismissal in June last year. She was considered "not likely to become an efficient and well-conducted constable".

In August 1995 she failed to report that a prisoner had temporarily escaped before being recaptured during a hospital visit. Mrs Berton, who holds joint British and American nationality, was also accused by a fellow officer of falling asleep while guarding a prisoner in hospital, a claim she denied yesterday.

The tribunal heard that Mrs Berton, a divorced mother of one, also wrongly filled in a custody observation report for a prisoner who had been released five hours earlier.

Asked why she had tried to involve social services when the mother left her children in a car in Central London, Mrs Berton said: "I thought it was

terribly reprehensible. I was absolutely appalled. There were three young children, two were crying and one was a baby." Miss Kent said: "To notify social services that children were at risk — do you think that was the correct procedure?" Mrs Berton replied: "I defend my actions. I am a mother."

At a case conference called to discuss her future with the police, her senior officer gave her a B for enthusiasm but D for common sense. Miss Kent told the tribunal.

Mrs Berton, a graduate from Boston University, moved to London in 1985. She dreamt of joining the police after gaining British citizenship and started as a probationer with the force in 1994.

She has told the tribunal she became the victim of "blind racism" and one officer told her not to wear lipstick because her lips were too large. Mrs Berton said she had been the victim of a "witch hunt" where all her mistakes were picked up by senior officers who constantly monitored her performance.

The hearing in Croydon continues today.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Teenager in court over school attack

A 15-year-old boy appeared before Preston magistrates yesterday, accused of wounding Jamie Evans, aged 16, who was stabbed in a school corridor on Tuesday. The youth, who cannot be named, was released on conditional bail and is due to appear before Preston Youth Court today. He spoke only to confirm his name, age and address throughout the ten-minute hearing. Reporting restrictions were not lifted. Jamie was in a stable and satisfactory condition in Blackpool's Victoria Hospital yesterday after the knife attack.

150,000 VWs recalled

Volkswagen has recalled 150,000 cars in one of the biggest safety alerts in Britain. Dealers have called back Ventos and Golfs made between 1994 and 1997 for faulty headlamp wiring. The company's biggest recall was in May 1995, when 310,000 Golfs were ordered back to dealers because of engine overheating problems. Nearly 300,000 cars have been recalled by 12 motor companies since the beginning of July.

Motorcycle youth held

A 13-year-old boy was held by police on suspicion of being drunk in charge of a motorcycle after a head-on crash in which another boy was killed. David Tucker, 14, who had not been wearing a crash helmet, died in hospital from head injuries after he and the other youngster crashed into each other while riding scramble motorcycles in a field at Lane End, Buckinghamshire. The youth was released without charge and police inquiries are continuing.

Dakota's daughter dies

The daughter of a member of the Sixties pop band Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas died after being struck by a car near her home. Lucinda Maxfield, 9, of Stockport, near Manchester, was kept alive on a life-support machine after the accident on Monday, but her parents made the decision to switch it off 24 hours later. Her father, Mike, was the original lead guitarist in the band and is now a business lecturer at Salford University.

Family seeks lost ashes

A bereaved family have complained that they have been unable to grieve for nearly a year because Parforce lost their mother's ashes. Ivy Handel died at 75 in Brisbane, Australia, last year after emigrating there 12 years ago. Her ashes were to be scattered around the family plot in East London, but never arrived. Parforce has offered £250 in compensation, but the family have declined.

Itchy bull trips switch

A South Western Electricity Board technical team called out to trace the source of a series of power cuts that blacked out supplies to dozens of homes around the Weston-super-Mare area of Somerset discovered that a bull had rubbed through a cable while trying to scratch its back. The exposed wire came into contact with another cable, causing the power to trip.

Cash for ancient boat

A Bronze Age boat found five years ago during road excavations in Dover is to go on permanent display after the award of £953,000 from the National Lottery. The timbers of the 3,000-year-old boat have been soaked in soluble wax to strengthen them before being freeze-dried. It will be displayed in an air-conditioned gallery which has yet to be built.

Chocolate on the tracks

The sweet company Mars began its first venture into the chocolate-box market with the launch of Celebrations, a selection of miniature replicas of Mars, Snickers, Bounty and Galaxy bars and Maltesers. A train full of celebrities left London yesterday to travel the country promoting the new brand, which hopes to capture a big share of the £600 million chocolate-box market.

SLAKING YOUR THIRST IN STYLE

The most expensive bottled water is thought to be from the American designer label DKNY at £1.50 for 490ml (about £3.13 a litre).

It is described by its manufacturers as "clear and refreshing alpine spring water" from a California source. It is sold in a clear plastic bottle featuring a label with the DKNY logo and a picture of New York taxis.

There is also a nozzle to drink from rather than a screwtop. The bottles are available only at the Donna Karan shop in London.

A *Times* survey of top restaurants found that they will all serve customers tap water if re-

quested. A spokeswoman for Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons in Great Milton, Oxfordshire, gave a typical response: "We do not offer it unless they make a special request, but that rarely happens. We believe there is a difference in taste and quality." The restaurant charges about £2 for a large bottle of Evian or Badoit.

DKNY water comes from a California bottler who sells the same water to a supermarket chain where it retails for a fraction of the price. A DKNY spokeswoman yesterday declined to comment on how the company could justify its high charges.

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Auction at mansion untouched by time

By JOHN SHAW

THE contents of an Edwardian country house in Scotland, barely disturbed since the turn of the century, are to go on sale next week.

Ladykirk, at Monkton, near Prestwick, South Ayrshire, was built by Robert Angus, a mining magnate, in 1903. It was furnished in the height of contemporary taste and completed in 1906.

Next Tuesday and Wednesday items ranging from Edwardian straw hats to day dresses to a full-size billiard table will be auctioned on the premises for an estimated total of £300,000.

Auction-goers will be struck by the elegant interiors. Each room reflects a different style, from Chippendale to Louis XV, and Jacobean to high Victorian. All are virtually unchanged since 1906 and even the receipts for furniture have survived.

The decision to sell has come from the present generation of the family who want to move to a smaller house and scale down the family possessions. Daniel Angus said: "Although it saddens us all greatly to have to part with Ladykirk, the responsibilities of maintaining a property of this size have proved too much in recent years."

The Victorian pictures, silver and English and continental ceramics reflect a bygone era. A complete library will be sold by Phillips, including a copy of *The Peter Pan Portfolio*, a limited edition of illustrations by Arthur Rackham from 1910.

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Five pit verbal skills in Preacher of the Year final

BY RUTH GLEDHILL

FIVE preachers have been chosen from a shortlist of 30 to go forward to the final of the third Times/College of Preachers Preacher of the Year award.

The three men and two women are all Anglicans. Four are ordained and just one is a lay preacher or reader. They will preach on holiness at a service at 2pm at Durham Cathedral on November 12, where entry is open to all. Their sermons will be assessed by a panel chaired by the broadcaster Joan Bakewell, and which will include the finalists from last year.

This year's finalists were picked from more than 300 entries by a panel from the College of Preachers, who assessed the original entries and then visited the 30 shortlisted preachers to hear them in their home parishes.

The shortlisted sermons will be published in *The Times Best Sermons for 1998* (Mowbray). The winning preacher will receive a £1,000 bronze of a dove by the sculptor Ros Stracey.



THE REV NEVILLE MANNING, 56, is Rector of St Leonard's, Denton, in East Sussex. "I see preaching as a pastoral activity. It is part of wanting to share things with people, to feed them and nurture them." He spends a week working on each sermon and commits them to memory.



GILL GREEN, 56, a retired teacher and a reader in the Church of England, attends St Peter's, a medieval church at Ousden near Newmarket, Suffolk. "Preaching is like telling people something they already know, but putting it in a different light. I do not like being in the pulpit. I prefer to walk around a bit."



THE REV PAUL WALKER, 34, is priest-in-charge of St Wilfrid's, Moorside, Sunderland, a new church which meets in a school. He became a Christian after trying "everything" as a teenager. "I found myself one day reading the Bible, something I had never done. I found the figure of Jesus remarkably appealing."



THE REV SALLY CHAPMAN, 42, is a team vicar in Short Heath, Willenhall, West Midlands. "I try to pick up on things that are current and relate to them. I like the opportunity to share part of my own experience and what I feel the Church is experiencing, then relating that to our experience as a community."



THE REV HARRY POTTER, 42, is a barrister who also serves as an honorary curate at St Giles, Camberwell, South London. "I found many years ago that, if I did a great deal or very little preparation for a sermon, it made no material difference whatsoever in terms of the quality of the sermon."

Christmas arrives early for church advertising drive

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

WITH only 98 shopping days to go before Christmas, the country's churches yesterday launched a seasonal advertising campaign which marks a return to a traditional message of the value of church-going.

In a tongue-in-cheek attempt to claim copyright ownership on the concept of Christmas, the posters and other literature feature the copyright symbol on the word Christmas.

Heading a campaign that would cost £250,000 if 90 per cent of the work and space were not being donated free, the churches' advertising network is to cover billboards nationwide with brightly col-

oured posters promoting churchgoing this Christmas. Churches of all denominations are being urged to buy A4-sized posters for their church noticeboards to pay for the remaining £25,000 of the campaign.

The campaign represents a departure from the controversial style that brought strong criticism of last year's Christmas campaign, which used the slogan "Bad Hair Day" and featured drawings of three cartoon Magi.

This year's Easter advertising campaign was also unsuccessful and had to be withdrawn after the network ran into difficulties over whether it was entitled to use a

phrase borrowed from the *X-Files*. The latest posters promise "great singing, friendly atmosphere and something to think about" in church this Christmas. They also claim that Christmas cannot be genuine without going to church.

In an attempt to reclaim the Christmas message for the Christian Churches, the network has placed the copyright symbol © next to the word Christmas. The network defended its use of copyright law in this case, even though in legal terms a single word cannot be copyrighted, and in any case copyright expires 70 years after an author's death.

John Griffiths, of the network, who was involved in the

CHRISTMAS

GREAT SINGING FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE AND SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

The churches' seasonal poster, which claims copyright on the word Christmas

Bad Hair Day campaign and who works for a London advertising agency, said: "Copyright on Christmas has not expired because God is not dead. We are taking out copyright on Christmas in the name of Christ, who is still alive."

The advertisement was created by four advertising executives, including Nick Drummond, of M & C Saatchi, who worked on the "demon eyes" poster for the Conservative Party, which attacked Tony Blair. The churches campaign has been

restricted to the use of words rather than pictures in an attempt to keep costs down.

Mr Griffiths said: "For many years, Christmas has been too commercialised. A marker needs to be put down so that the preciousness of Christmas is preserved. In an attempt to do this in a creative and attention-grabbing way, we have decided to copyright Christmas."

The Rev Tom Ambrose, director of communications in the diocese of Ely, said: "The law of copyright protects the product of someone's skill.

creativity, labour and time. We reckon that just about sums up God's input into Christmas and, as His representatives, we are laying claim to that right."

"Christmas has been hijacked in the high street and we want to let people know that much of what they are getting in December is not the real thing. If they want a genuine Christmas, then church is the best place for experiencing it."

The posters will appear in December and be reinforced by a radio commercial.

'Baughen again' Christians keep it in the family

WHEN the congregation of St James's, Clerkenwell, intones the familiar words "In the name of the Father and of the Son", they are likely to have more on their minds than God alone, because the church is about to receive an unusual father and son ministry (Ruth Gledhill writes).

The Right Rev Michael Baughen, 67, former Bishop of Chester, will on Monday be licensed as priest-in-charge of the inner London parish. At the same service, his son, Andrew, 33, will be licensed as a priest in the parish.

Andrew, who is married with two daughters, said he has admired his father from his days as vicar of All Souls', Langham Place — Central London's leading evangelical church. He said that he and his father had different gifts to offer: "I am incredibly proud

of my dad. I will really enjoy having him around."

Although his father will not be paid, he intends to be present at the church for as many Sundays as possible, and they will share the preaching and strategy development. Bishop Baughen said: "It will be wonderful to work with my son. He has got tremendous gifts and it is a great delight to be able to learn from him."

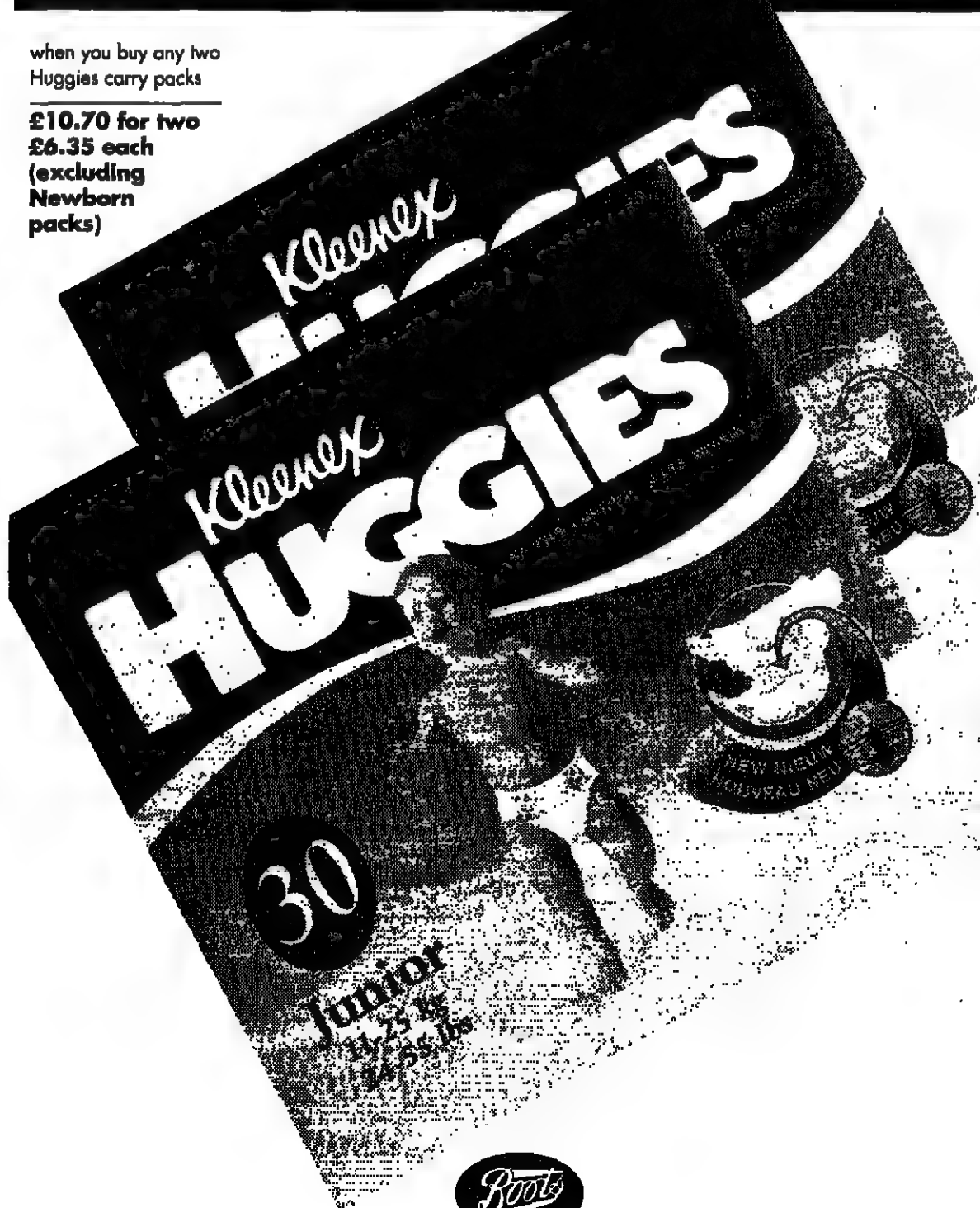
St James's, which has a congregation of 30, has been without a priest for 14 months. Andrew is moving from a curacy at St Mark's, Battersea Rise, a South London evangelical church with a congregation of 300.

Proposed changes include a Sunday morning service staged like a film set and an evening service in discussion format.

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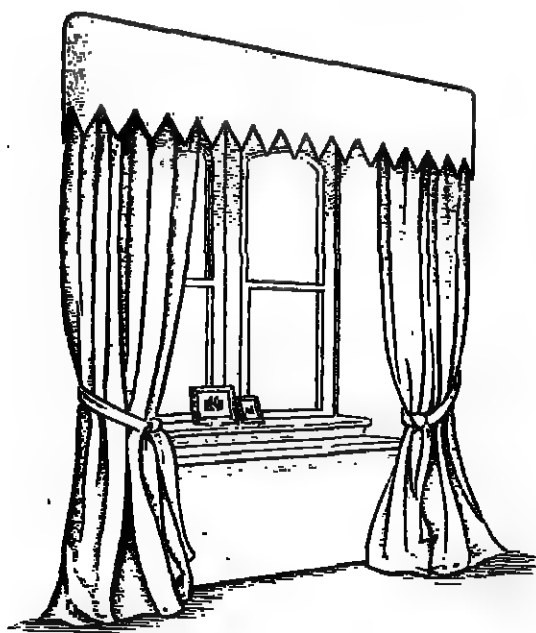
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His stepfather, a 45-year-old gas fitter, took a sip and spat it out when he felt a burning sensation. Mr Russell said: "Anthony was not working. He was sitting at home doing nothing. I could not manage the house on my own. There were so many memories of my wife. I did not want to stay."

*FOR EXAMPLE THE ABOVE COMPLETE EXTENSION COMPRESSED CARBONETS: 100mm Hub Waist Unit x 3, 100mm Full Height Wall Unit x 2, 600mm End Height Wall Unit, 600mm Hub Waist Unit, 600mm x Drawer Base Unit, ACCESSORIES: Stanley Set Lay-on-set (P189)CSC, Mease and Overline (P189), Topset (PAP 114)CSC, 600mm x 30mm x 21 x 1, Worktop 30mm x 30mm x 1, Continuous Plinth x 2, Uniform Plinth x 2, APPLIANCES: AG Appliances package (A9H111123)COMPRESS, Decore, Decore Mease or Wifera (A9H111123)CSC, Get Hot, Mease and Overline (P189), Extractor, Mease or Wifera (A9H111123), Vasheded Edge (A9H1123), PEST INFORMATION: Details and prices are for rigid units and are for options, appliances and accessories as listed.

Storm over safety in Africa's skies

THE mid-air collision of two military planes — a German Tupolev Tu154 and an American C141 Starlifter — off the Angolan coast, with the loss of 33 lives, has again dramatised the anxieties of civil airline pilots over the perilous state of air traffic safety procedures over much of Africa.

There seems little doubt these procedures were again deficient on this occasion, for it seems likely the two aircraft were never told of their nearness to each other or even that they were on the same flight path. That this was not known for certain three days after the crash highlights the problem.

Ordinarily there would be a full record of all air traffic control communications on tape, allowing an immediate and definitive confirmation as to whether such routine information was given. In this case there was a delay of 24 hours before the disappearance of the planes was announced by the two air forces after both had spent many fruitless hours trying to establish their planes' whereabouts from various

R. W. Johnson reports on pilots' fears after mid-air collision

ious African countries. Volker Rühle, the German Defence Minister, made no bones about where he felt the blame lies. "Air safety in Africa has to be improved," he told a press conference. "Our military transport planes have never had an accident in 40 years. There were no safety deficits on our part."

Aviation safety in Africa is bound to be a key issue when the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations meets in Ghana this week, because both it and especially its South African chapter, Alpa-SA, have spoken repeatedly about the dangerous neglect of air safety procedures, particularly in the western part of the continent. This time it seems likely the Angolan authorities may be at fault.

In July, Alpa-SA said that last year Angolan air traffic controllers had reported 12 near-misses in their airspace.

Aviation sources say many such incidents go unreported and the real figure is likely to be far higher, particularly when the number of non-IATA (International Air Transport Association) planes in the air over the continent is taken into account.

The problem, according to the international pilots' federation, is that the overflight fees paid by airlines, about £4,000 for each Johannesburg to Europe flight, are pocketed by African countries which do not spend it on training or equipment as they are supposed to. So desperate have South African Airways pilots become about the virtual non-existence over Africa of the radar, waypoints, beacons, airfield safety facilities and air traffic control communications prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation that there has recently been talk of its aircraft again flying

round the bulge of Africa, as it did in apartheid days when sanctions forced such a route.

The problem is that International Civil Aviation Organisation standards are not compulsory, a fact that has caused some airlines to threaten the withholding of overflight fees or, in the case of South African Airways, to offer to pay the fees in kind by installing the necessary equipment in countries that lack it.

The only other means of pressure available would seem to be the expulsion of African countries from the International Civil Aviation Organisation or their airlines from IATA.

In practice, airlines are reacting to the danger by installing more and more anti-collision equipment and radars on board planes, although pilots say that reliance on such in-plane equipment is analogous to road safety being regulated by car horns rather than traffic lights, white lines, cats' eyes and highway codes.

Leading article, page 23



Two survivors of the UN helicopter crash in central Bosnia on their way to a Nato military hospital in Sarajevo. Twelve people perished in the accident

Crash in fog kills 12 on UN helicopter

FROM TOM WALKER IN BELGRADE

THE international community's second most senior negotiator in Bosnia was killed yesterday, along with 11 others, in a helicopter crash in the centre of the country. A Briton was reported among the dead.

Cerd Wagner, 55, a German diplomat with extensive Balkan experience, was deputy to Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative. He took up the post in July. Diplomats said Charles Morphet, the Briton killed, had served as an army liaison officer in the Foreign Office before transferring to the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia at the start of the year. He had recently married, they said.

The United Nations in Sarajevo confirmed yesterday afternoon that a Russian-made Mi-8 transport helicopter carrying Herr Wagner and other senior personnel had crashed 30 miles northwest of Sarajevo in the Fojnica mountain range. The helicopter, leased to the UN, had four Ukrainian crew.

Speaking at a news conference in Bonn, Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, said a total of five Germans were killed in the accident, five Americans, a Briton and a Pole. "We are deeply affected by this tragic accident," he said.

The Ukrainians, including the pilot, were believed to be the only survivors of the crash, he added.

Herr Kinkel said the helicopter hit a mountain after emerging from a fog bank. It had taken off from Sarajevo in good weather conditions at about 0.15am but had then run into thick fog. "The pilot ran into the fog bank, came out of it, and then immediately flew into a cliff," the minister said.

Fighter accidents halt training flights

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE Pentagon last night ordered a 24-hour halt to all military training flights after the night-time collision of two F16 fighter jets above the Atlantic Ocean, the fifth crash involving US military aircraft in as many days.

In a directive issued by William Cohen, the US Defence Secretary, the heads of the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps were instructed to ground training sorties for the duration of a swift safety review. Operational

flights would continue, Mr Cohen said. The orders came after an accident late on Tuesday night when the two fighters, carrying pilots training for night-time flying, collided just minutes after take-off from the local National Guard base. Two men were forced to parachute into the ocean and a third to nurse his crippled plane back to land. All three pilots were safe yesterday.

The incident came seven months after another mishap involving two F16s from the 177th Fighter Wing in which the jets tailed a civilian aircraft so closely that the passenger plane took emergency evasive

action. This week, however, has seen a spate of accidents. On Monday, a Marine FA18 Hornet fighter crashed off the North Carolina coast, killing both pilots.

A Navy FA18 fighter crashed in Oman on Sunday. The pilot also died. On the same day, an F117A Stealth fighter plunged to the ground during an airshow in Maryland. Its pilot ejected safely.

Details remain sketchy of a crash on Saturday in which a C141 Starlifter cargo plane is thought to have collided with a German military aircraft off the coast of Africa. Of the 33 people feared killed, nine were Americans.

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► REWARDING TIMES ◀

PLAY PORTFOLIO
£200,000 TO BE WON

£2,000 TO BE WON TODAY — TURN TO THE EQUITY PAGE 33

This week we launch new Portfolio, an exciting opportunity to play the stock market without getting your fingers burnt. You can win £2,000 a day six days a week in *The Times*, and you can play every Sunday in *The Sunday Times* to win £5,000. Better still, there is a £10,000 weekly prize, if you play Portfolio in both papers, seven days a week. Your gamecard was inserted in Tuesday's *Times* and another will be inserted on Monday, September 22. Playing Portfolio is easy and fun. Every week companies' share prices go up and down in the real world of the Stock Exchange. So you can experience the excitement of the stock market swings, but without taking any risks.

Yesterday's winner, Mr Richard Boyes, 37, a civil servant, of Enfield, Middx, won £2,000.

HOW TO PLAY

- On each individual Portfolio gamecard there are eight numbers printed in a grid. (See example, above)
- These numbers represent eight out of 44 companies listed on the Portfolio panel (see Equity Prices, page 33).
- The eight are your "Portfolio of Shares".
- The 44 companies are taken from the hundreds whose shares are listed on *The Times* Equity Prices page every day.
- Simply check the share price movement (+ or -) of your eight Portfolio shares.
- When you have checked all eight share movements and entered them on to the Portfolio panel on page 33,



add them up to obtain your plus or minus total.
● When adding up your total, ignore fractions, ie enter 16½ as 16 (the symbol ... equals no change).
● If your overall total exactly matches the points required in the Daily Portfolio Dividend, printed on the Portfolio panel on page 33, you win or share the £2,000 daily prize.

WEEKLY ACCUMULATOR GAME

The weekly accumulator game starts in *The Times* on Monday, September 22. To play the weekly accumulator game you simply add up your daily Portfolio totals, Monday to Sunday. If your accumulator total matches exactly the weekly portfolio accumulator dividend, published in the *Sunday Times*, you win or share the weekly accumulator prize of £10,000.

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR PRIZE

Claims for *The Times* daily Portfolio dividend must be made to the Portfolio claims line on 0171-481 3388 between 9.30am and 3pm today. No claims can be accepted outside these hours and you must claim your prize the day you win. You must have your card with you when you claim. Other persons can claim on your behalf provided they have your card. No responsibility can be accepted for failure to contact the claims office for any reason within the stated hours. In the event of more than one valid claim for any prize, that prize will be divided equally among the winners.

*You can get a Portfolio card by calling the card request line on 0171-481 3385 during normal office hours. There will be another gamecard in *The Times* on Monday, September 22, and cards are also available at selected newsagents.

THE TIMES

Crash in fog kills 12 on UN helicopter

**WORLD
SUMMARY**

Iranians shot in Pakistan

Gunmen on a motorcycle, almost certainly Sunni Muslim extremists, shot dead five Shia Iranian air force technicians and their local driver in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi yesterday (Christopher Thomas writes). One person was wounded.

Religious divisions pose an increasing threat to the Islamic state, whose class, political and economic conflicts mean it is a country struggling for survival.

DNA tests for 'The Fugitive'

New York: The body of Dr Sami Steppard, whose case inspired the long-running television show *The Fugitive*, was exhumed for DNA tests in an attempt to establish that he did not kill his wife (Tunku Varadarajan writes). He was convicted in 1954 of murdering his wife, Marilyn, and spent a decade in jail before winning his freedom in a retrial. He died in 1970.

Free French war hero dies

Paris: The Allies lost one of their most courageous war heroes this week. French Brigadier-General Georges Bergé, a Colditz survivor and the first Allied secret agent to be parachuted into Nazi-occupied France as part of de Gaulle's Free French forces, died on Sunday in France at the age of 88. (Susan Bell writes)

Troops patrol riots capital

Jakarta: Soldiers and police patrolled the South Sulawesi capital of Ujung Pandang, still hit by sporadic violence on the third day of anti-Chinese unrest in which at least six people have died, residents said. "Mobs are still petting houses and shops," one said by phone. (AFP)

Swiss miffed at howl in wall

Geneva: Residents of the Swiss village of Bernex, on the outskirts of Geneva near the French border, asked authorities to have an automated cash dispenser removed because of noise, claiming overuse by non-residents. (Reuters)

Soldiers in drag battle for Congo capital

FROM SAM KILEY IN KINSHASA

HELICOPTERS strafed the already shattered streets of Brazzaville yesterday with rockets and cannon fire as fighting between government troops and militias in drag escalated in a final push for control of the city.

After the helicopters made leisurely sorties across Brazzaville killing inhabitants too old or ill to flee with other civilians, witnesses across the Congo River saw one aircraft hit and plunge to the ground in a plume of black smoke.

Aid workers said that the troops had copied images from the Liberian civil war and had started to dress up in looted wigs and women's clothing, with garish make-up. One foreigner who left the city recently said he had been held up at a roadblock by a militiaman "in full Father Christmas kit - including a long white beard".

Brazzaville's largely forgotten war is between forces of President Lissouba and the former President, Major-General Denis Sassou-Nguesso, leader of the "Cobra" militia, which has claimed thousands of lives and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes since June. The conflict has escalated since another militia leader, Bernard Kolelas, the Mayor of Brazzaville, joined forces with the Government this week, dragging his

The only sources of aid to Brazzaville's residents have been the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins sans Frontières. Their officials said there was not a major humanitarian crisis yet, as most civilians had fled to their home areas. But food supplies are expected to be exhausted with the approach of the rainy season.

More damaging has been the collapse of order among young fighters. The militias' metamorphosis into voodoo armies beyond the control of their officers further undermined attempts to broker a peace agreement between the rival politicians who ignored a ceasefire plea from regional leaders to unleash three days of artillery bombardments.

Nearby Kinshasa has become used to the background sound of artillery. Many residents of the capital of the former Zaire peer across the river and compare the skills of the gunners on the two sides.

The shooting down of the helicopter from Mr Lissouba's army was followed by direct hits on the Nambemba Tower building, the headquarters of Elf-Aquitaine. Mr Lissouba has previously accused Elf of giving finance to General Sassou-Nguesso.

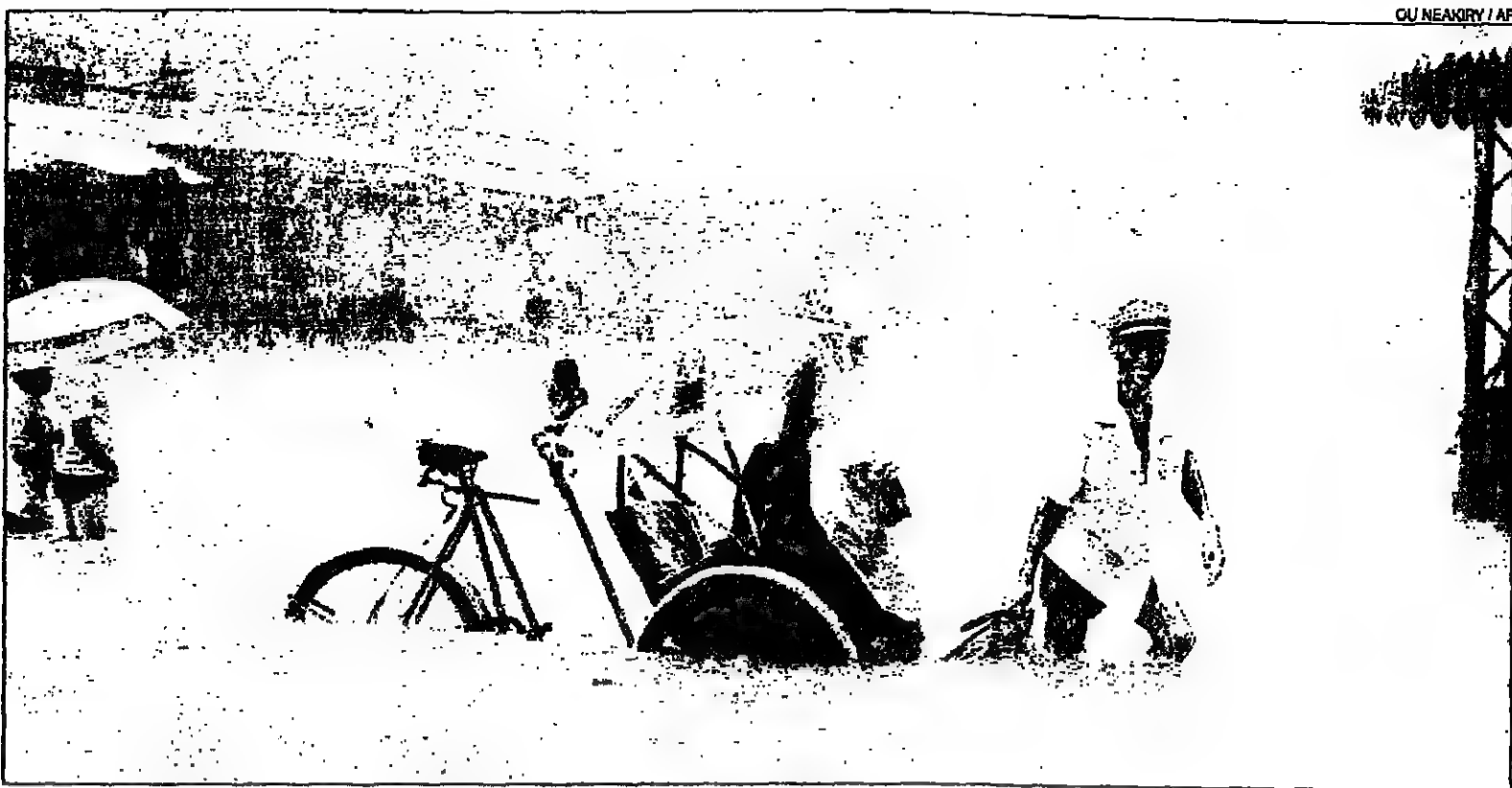
Kabila clash with UN threatens foreign aid

LAURENT KABILA, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was set yesterday for a clash with Kofi Annan over his refusal to allow United Nations investigations into widespread allegations of massacres (Sam Kiley writes). The clash could jeopardise badly needed foreign funding for the country.

Mr Annan, the UN Secretary-General, is expected to pull a team of 24 investigators out of the former Zaire this week if the Congolese President refuses to allow them to deploy without "minders".

Mr Kabila, who took power with the help of Tutsi soldiers from Rwanda who continue to dominate his army, is anxious to preserve good relations with his eastern neighbour, whose troops are alleged to have slaughtered thousands of Hutu refugees. Reliant on the Tutsi fighters to keep him in power, he looked determined this week to sacrifice foreign support which is likely to be cut drastically if the UN investigation is closed.

"The backlash would be disastrous for the Congo," a European ambassador said.



A cycle cab driver is reduced to dragging his fare as heavy rains flooded the streets of Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, yesterday.

Sherry barons staggered by 'hangover-free' fino

FROM GILES TREMLETT
IN MADRID

SORE-HEADED Spanish sherry producers are reeling from the appearance of what its inventor claims is the world's first hangover-free fino.

José Estévez's Tio Mateo *fino* should have encouraged citizens of Jerez de la Frontera to drink all night and dance all day. Instead it has produced one of the biggest headaches in the town's history.

The aristocratic families who run most of the town's centuries-old sherry bodegas say the claims being made for

the hangover-free upstart are grossly exaggerated. They refuse to accept the implication that ordinary sherry can be anything but good for you.

The town's Sherry Council has refused Señor Estévez permission to advertise the special properties of Tio Mateo on the bottle labels.

Señor Estévez says the secret to his fino's hangover-reducing properties lies in its low histamine levels. Histamine is blamed for many of the worst effects of hangovers, producing

A self-made millionaire, Señor

Estévez has ploughed a large part of his fortune into the bodega he bought 20 years ago. But he says the old families have turned their backs on him. He blames his background as the son of a local labourer who quarried sand for wine bottles. "It is the old boy network that counts here," he said.

Señor Estévez claims his attempts to convert his fellow townsmen to the new fino are also being blocked by multinational drinks companies afraid of his success. "I have been the David to the Goliath of the multinationals," he says.

Six years of work with Germany's

Underberg winery, which also produces low histamine wines, has allowed him to perfect a technique for ridding sherry of the potentially damaging substance. Ordinary sherry contains up to 11mg per litre. Tio Mateo has less than 0.02mg.

But the Sherry Council refuses to recognise that low histamine necessarily makes a drink less liable to produce a hangover. It says histamine levels are even higher in many foodstuffs, such as cheese, strawberries and yoghurt. "Scientific opinion differs," sniffs one rival. "What really matters is the amount of the stuff you drink."

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America rejects global ban on landmines

AMERICA refused to sign an international treaty banning landmines agreed by 89 nations in Oslo yesterday. Eric Newsum, head of the American delegation, said the conference had refused to accept an American compromise formula that met Washington's security concerns.

He hailed the completion of the Canadian-sponsored treaty banning the use, storage or manufacture of all anti-personnel mines, and said it was a "significant accomplishment". But it would have been a much stronger treaty had the negotiators taken steps so that the US could have joined.

President Clinton, attempting to limit criticism of his rejection of a global landmine treaty, last night announced a series of unilateral measures by America designed to show its commitment to a worldwide moratorium. Speaking in the Oval Office, he said America could not sign up to a draft treaty that did not accept the unique responsibilities of the world's only superpower.

"Unfortunately, as it is drafted, I cannot, in good conscience, add America's name to that treaty," Mr Clinton said. "There is a line I simply cannot cross which is the safety and security of our men and women in uniform. But America will continue to take the lead in ending the use of landmines."

The sticking point was America's demand to be allowed to keep mines deployed along South Korea's border with North Korea. The Pentagon has argued forcefully that, with the unstable situation in the Communist North and hundreds of thou-

The defence of South Korea is sticking point, write Michael Binyon and Tom Rhodes

sands of North Korean troops deployed very close to the border, removal of the mines would increase the risk of invasion.

America demanded a nine-year exemption for Korea, and also wanted to keep "smart" anti-personnel mines that self-destruct so that they could be deployed to protect anti-tank mines. It also wanted countries to be allowed to withdraw from the treaty, after six months' notice.

Swayed by the forceful rejection of these arguments by Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Foreign Minister and instigator of the Ottawa Process on landmines, delegates rejected the American proposals. They argued that other countries would argue for similar exemptions.

America initially refused to take part in the Ottawa Process, but then relented in response to world opinion. The campaign for a ban, powerfully boosted by Diana, Princess of Wales, led President Clinton to accept the principle. But over the past two weeks the Americans have twice changed their minds on whether they would accept a

total ban. They have until December to sign. Mr Newsum said America would announce its final position in the next day or so.

Mr Clinton said he had directed the Pentagon to develop alternatives by 2003 and that landmines would be withdrawn from the demilitarised zone between the two Koreas three years later.

Appointing a former senior military official as his personal adviser on the issue, Mr Clinton also pledged \$68 million (£42.5 million) towards demining efforts throughout the world, starting in Chad, Zimbabwe and Lebanon, and urged a 25 per cent increase in that figure starting next year.

Neither Russia nor China was present in Oslo, although Moscow has already declared a moratorium on the sale and use of mines. China is the main manufacturer of the cheap mines increasingly used by insurgents and guerrillas in the Third World. It is estimated that every year they kill or maim 26,000 people.

Under the terms of the treaty, each country must destroy all stockpiles by 2005, including all mines deployed on its territory. In theory Britain must remove all mines laid by the Argentinians in the Falklands, though this would depend on improving clearance technology in boggy land. In December, Canada will launch the second stage of the Ottawa Process, which will deal with verification, mine-clearing technology and Western help for war-torn countries where reconstruction and agriculture must wait until the land has been cleared of mines.



Governor Pete Wilson examines an M16 assault rifle yesterday with Commander Rick Dinse, centre, and Lieutenant Anthony Alba

LA gun law puts heat on robbers

Assault rifles boost police arsenal as criminals echo film violence, writes Giles Whittell in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES has raised the stakes in America's inner-city arms race by issuing its police with 600 M16 assault rifles as a defence against the region's increasingly ruthless bank robbers, whose sense of reality, some say, has been distorted by crime films.

The weapons, designed for storming heavily armed enemy positions in time of war, will be assigned to senior patrol officers for use at their discretion. Pete Wilson, the California Governor, said yesterday.

His announcement, fulfilled a promise to boost the Los Angeles Police Department's firepower after a shoot-out in February, in which officers were pinned down for several hours by two gunmen bristling with assault weapons who had robbed a bank.

The "battle of North Hollywood", as it was dubbed, was broadcast live on national television. It ended in the deaths of both robbers, but only after police improvised by running to a nearby gun store to borrow heavy, rapid-fire weapons.

The harrowing episode had uncanny echoes of scenes from the violent Michael Mann thriller, *Heat*.

"Never, ever again do I want to see officers from the Los Angeles Police Department outgunned," said Mr Wilson, a former Marine who made law enforcement at all costs a plank of his 1994 re-election campaign.

"Never, ever again do I want to see them having to rush to a gun shop in order to be able to equalise the firepower of the thugs." As he

spoke, police were sealing off another northern Los Angeles neighbourhood after a gun battle between security guards and a carload of masked robbers had left one dead and three missing.

The violence erupted soon after the 9am opening of a Van Nuys branch of the Great Western Bank in the San Fernando Valley. The two plainclothes guards opened fire on the robbers after seeing them pull out a handgun in a car outside the bank's rear entrance.

At least 12 shots were exchanged between the

guards and a man brandishing a 9mm machine pistol, who died at the scene of gunshot wounds.

In contrast to the North Hollywood robbery, in which 11 police and six civilians were wounded, no one else was injured.

The incident highlighted the escalating danger in some Californian neighbourhoods of brazen armed robberies, carried out in daylight by a grimly lethal breed of latter-day outlaw — but little emphasis was needed.

As other forms of violent crime dip, Los Angeles has become known to the FBI in

recent years as the "bank robbery capital of the world". Police frequently respond to as many as four hold-ups a day, many of them in the San Fernando Valley, which forms the city's vast northern lobe and boasts several contrasting distinctions, including the world's largest car showroom, dozens of pornography studios and thousands of desirable hillside homes.

The bank targeted yesterday has been robbed twice before, in April and July last year, a spokesman said.

The gunmen killed in February's shootout were like-

wise veterans of the city's bank robbery industry. Larry Phillips and Emil Mataraneanu were posthumously linked to two unsolved robberies, which were thought to have netted them up to \$1.7 million (£1,090,000), and two armoured car hijacks which experts linked to the opening sequence of *Heat*, in which a van carrying millions of dollars is caught in a deadly ambush.

Even in the more salubrious neighbourhoods of Los Angeles, bank visits by armoured vans are now tightly choreographed events featuring grim-faced guards with drawn weapons. Every second is filmed by security cameras and passers-by are wise to pause until the van departs.

The North Hollywood shootout brought new demands from gun-control advocates as well as police.

Two Democratic state senators, including Jane Fonda's former husband, Tom Hayden, called for new laws to close loopholes in the federal ban on assault weapons.

Russian and Chinese-made AK47s, the weapons of choice of most robbers, are still easily obtained on the black market.

Designed in 1947 and for decades the Soviet Army's chief assault rifle, they are often smuggled into the US with small five-round ammunition clips, then modified to take 75-round drums.

The newer M16, properly used, will pound most AK47 users into submission. It can fire 800 rounds per minute and is accurate to nearly half a mile.



Robert De Niro, left, and Val Kilmer in the film *Heat*, later imitated in real life

Marine who evaded Vietnam duty arrested after 30 years

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

ALMOST 30 years after he evaded the draft to Vietnam, a US Marine was yesterday under close arrest at a Californian army base as the Pentagon considered whether to charge him with desertion.

Randy Caudill, 48, was arrested at the northern border of Washington State as he attempted to return to Canada, his home since 1968.

A routine check by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service had found a warrant for desertion from the Marine Corps and Mr Caudill was flown to Camp Pendleton near San Diego, the base where he had trained as a radio operator before refusing the call to arms.

He was 19 at the time. The year had begun with the bloody Tet offensive, the aeri-

al bombing of Hanoi and the siege of the Marine base at Khe Sanh. Angry anti-war protesters had taken to the streets of America and bitter divisions over the war had driven President Johnson to abandon re-election.

The United States this year sent an ambassador to Hanoi for the first time since the fall of Saigon and, perhaps most tellingly, Bill Clinton, an anti-Vietnam activist who evaded the draft, resides at the White House. But Mr Caudill nevertheless could face a maximum of five years in prison for desertion.

Although an amnesty was granted during the Carter Administration, it covered only those who had fled to Canada to avoid military service, not military personnel

who had deserted. Sent on holiday before his troop was deployed to Vietnam, Mr Caudill had spent a week with his family in Ohio and then, like so many others of his generation, chose to flee to Canada.

A resident of Winnipeg, Mr Caudill is married and has three daughters and two granddaughters.

Marine Corps officials were yesterday considering what charges to press against the former soldier. "The Marine Corps takes this very seriously," said Captain Scott Lopez, an official at Pendleton.

As Vietnam was not declared a war by Congress, the prospect of the death penalty enforced for desertion in time of a conflict was not considered an option.

Clinton spurns \$368bn tobacco deal with call for tougher action

BY TOM RHODES

PRESIDENT CLINTON rejected a \$368.5 billion (£231 billion) tobacco settlement yesterday, concluding that the deal did not meet his ambitious goal of drastically reducing smoking among children.

Announcing his verdict on the settlement, made public in June after almost 90 days of negotiation between the tobacco industry and the attorneys-general of 40 states, Mr Clinton demanded tougher ac-

tion by Congress to achieve bipartisan national tobacco legislation.

He called for sharply increased penalties on cigarette makers if they did not meet targets to reduce the number of young smokers within a decade. The President said that, if all the penalties were imposed, the price per packet of cigarettes should rise by as much as \$1.50, more than double the estimated increase under the original proposal.

"This is not about money," Mr

Clinton said during an Oval Office announcement. "It is about fulfilling our responsibility as parents and as responsible adults. This is about changing the behaviour of the United States." Rather than deliver a point-by-point critique of the huge deal, Mr Clinton outlined issues to be addressed by new legislation which he said would seek to resolve the industry's legal and regulatory problems.

The White House refusal to endorse the plan, initially designed

to place 25 years of restrictions on smoking in exchange for well defined limits on cigarette manufacturers' liability in legal actions, effectively drained the proposal of its little remaining momentum.

It certainly removes any possibility that a deal, albeit in amended form, could come before Congress before its adjournment at the end of next month or the beginning of November. No action is expected before next year.

Apart from the increase in packet

prices, Mr Clinton said that any new settlement must give the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) more power over the control of nicotine. He said the tobacco industry should be held more accountable, offered the strongest possible incentives and urged to bring a voluntary end to cigarette advertising that targeted children.

Walking a careful political tightrope, and once again promoting Vice-President Al Gore as his negotiator-in-chief, Mr Clinton

said any new Bill crafted by Congress should protect farmers in the tobacco-rich Southern states.

His announcement was greeted with elation by anti-smoking forces which have been arguing with the White House that the original settlement ceded too much to the industry and did not hold makers accountable for their apparent knowledge of nicotine addiction.

Hailed by the attorneys-general as an historic achievement, the deal had contained an impressive array

of anti-smoking measures, including protections against secondary smoke, severe limitations on advertising and huge payments to reimburse states for smoking-related healthcare costs.

A White House task force concluded last week, however, that the deal limited the authority of the FDA and would fail to achieve the stated goal of reducing smoking by young people by at least 30 per cent in five years and double that figure in a decade.

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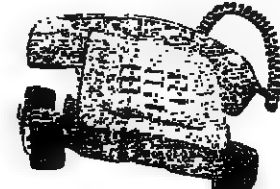
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Versace, above right, gave his companion Antonia D'Amico, left, £20,000 a month. His sister Donatella gets nothing, but her son inherits his art collection.

Although some non-Orthodox denominations, including the Baptists, will be officially recognised, they will be severely restricted in practice from public religious activities or even charity work.

Mr Vaprov is resigned to the Bill going through, but adamant that he will continue his work. "Look at Russian history. Moments of freedom never last long. We have been persecuted in the past and must face persecution again."

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JOSE MIGUEL GÓMEZ / REUTERS

'Pot' shot fired by Jospin's loosest cannon

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

DOMINIQUE VOYNET, the outspoken French Environment Minister, has called for legalisation of cannabis and admitted smoking marijuana herself in an interview that will embarrass Cabinet colleagues and confirm her reputation as the loosest cannon in the Government.

This week Mme Voinet, head of the French Green Party, replied "Yes" when asked by the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* whether she had smoked "joints".

The interviewer, François Cané, then asked if she still smoked marijuana. Mme Voinet responded with an emphatic, if ambiguous, French expletive to sidestep the question. "Merde," said the Environment Minister.

A medical doctor, Mme Voinet insisted that the occasional use of cannabis had "no effect on health and social relations" and should be legalised. "I have always been in favour of legalisation... I am more concerned by the number of people who need sleeping pills than the number who confess to having smoked a joint," she said.

Mme Voinet was brought into the Cabinet after the victory of an electoral coalition of Socialists, Communists and Greens. The election marked the first time that the environmentalists had won seats in parliament.

Mme Voinet's views on cannabis, which have not been backed by the rest of the Cabinet or Lionel Jospin, the

Prime Minister, represent a stark departure from the policy of the previous Government, which promised a crackdown on drugs and criticised The Netherlands for its liberal policies.

In the short life of the left-wing Government, Mme Voinet has emerged as the minister most likely to provoke controversy. After the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, she said she did not understand the level of emotion aroused and said the accident should be put "into perspective".

Mme Voinet's remarks on legalising drugs are likely to put further strain on the ruling coalition. An annual rally in support of legalising drugs, backed by the Greens, was cancelled by the Paris prefecture earlier this year, with the approval of the Interior Minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement.

Compounding the Government's uncertainty on the issue is the fact that Bernard Kouchner, the Health Minister, is a signatory to a petition calling for the legalisation of cannabis. During the election campaign, M Jospin admitted that drug laws dating back to 1970 needed urgent revision. "Far from preventing drug addiction, the law only aggravates a problem that should be examined in the light of the experiences and policies put into effect by our neighbours."

Confirming her reputation for shooting from the hip, on Tuesday Mme Voinet accused the national nuclear reprocessing company, Cogema, of violating safety rules. After a complaint by Greenpeace, she said the company had broken security regulations during a clean-up operation in the plant at La Hague, on the Channel near Cherbourg. The minister said the cleansing operation would be resumed "only when total confinement is assured", and promised a police report.

Allegations of high radioactivity levels around the plant earlier this year prompted her to issue an immediate ban on fishing, sailing and swimming in the vicinity in advance of an official safety report.



A plane sprays herbicide on a Colombian illegal poppy crop. It was later hit by gunfire, allegedly from guerrillas, and the pilot was slightly injured in one foot

British minister sees gun attack on anti-drugs plane

BY VICTORIA FLETCHER



Illegally grown poppies being shown to Arthur Colman, the British Ambassador, centre, and Tony Lloyd

TONY LLOYD, the Foreign Office Minister for Latin America and Africa, witnessed the Colombian drug war at first hand when a plane spraying herbicide on a poppy crop was fired on only minutes after he had landed in the jungle.

The aircraft came under fire while destroying an illegal poppy plantation on Tuesday. Mr Lloyd watched as the plane and its pilot were hit. Two Colombian military helicopter gunships were called in to return the fire and to escort the crop sprayer to the ground, where the pilot was treated for an injured foot.

Using chemical defoliation sprays is often the most effective way to destroy the drug plantations on the borders of the Huila and Cauca provinces of southeast Colombia, but low-level flying makes the aircraft easy targets for left-wing rebels below.

The Foreign Office said that Mr Lloyd was not in any direct danger. "The minister

was unperturbed by the incident and continued with his visit," an official said. He added that the event would not alter the minister's itinerary for the visit, which has included talks with President Samper about Colombia's efforts to combat the drugs traffickers. "Drugs barons are a huge problem in Colombia; we are there to talk to the Government about these issues and we will continue to do so." The official said that the incident would not distract Mr Lloyd's attention from other important issues discussed with the President, covering human rights and especially Britain's future trading interests.

This is Mr Lloyd's first visit as minister to the South American country to view local police efforts in eradicating the drug crops. Britain increasingly has been providing military assistance to the Colombian Government in the drugs war, including SAS instructors.

Guerrilla campaign stifles 'sham' democracy in Colombia

FROM VICTORIA BURNETT IN GACHALA, COLOMBIA

WHEN Colombians go to the polls to choose their local government on October 26, the people of Gachala will not be joining them. Since rebels stormed this small Andean town on the night of August 3, all those running for mayor or the local council have withdrawn from the race.

The rebels gave aspiring politicians little choice: renounce your candidacy or become a military

target. To drive the message home, they blew the police station to pieces, dragged two businessmen from their houses and shot them dead, and called the petrified townspeople to the central square to tell them that elections were prohibited.

"It's the choice to take if you want to save your life," says Lucrécia Buitrago, the local council president, who decided not to run for re-election after the guerrillas' visit.

Gachala is one of around 40 municipalities without a single candidate in the elections. From the

Caribbean coast to the coca-growing plains of southeast Colombia, rebels have launched a violent offensive — killing at least 25 mayoral candidates and abducting hundreds to force them to drop out of the political race.

"They're trying to twist the elections to sabotage them," says Gabriel Toro, head of the Foundation of Municipal Governments. He expects elections to be cancelled in around 10 per cent of the country's 1,072 municipalities. Where polls are cancelled, a military mayor will be installed. Politics and bloodshed go

hand in hand in Colombia, where left-wing rebels, right-wing paramilitaries and drug traffickers traditionally use violence to dispose of opposition. Colombia prides itself on being the longest-standing constitutional democracy in Latin America, but it is increasingly one that exists only on paper.

"Colombian politics has become armed politics. Everyone knows that they can get something at a low cost through violence," says Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, a political scientist.

Over the past year, rebels have

repeatedly humiliated the armed forces, taking advantage of the power vacuum left by a weakened government. President Samper was politically crippled by evidence that he won office in 1994 with the help of \$6 million (£3.7 million) from the Cali drug cartel.

Colombia's rebels have declared his Government illegitimate and by sabotaging the elections have shown that they are now running many rural areas. They are also hampering what they consider to be a sham democratic process.



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Girlfriend accused of chicken battery

Fort Lauderdale: A Florida woman was arrested after allegedly pelting her boyfriend with frozen chicken legs, a telephone and a circular saw when he came home late, police said.

Sabrina Richardson was enraged when Darryl Garrett returned at about 1am on

Monday to the home they shared, said detectives at Broward County Sheriff's Office. Ms Richardson allegedly hit him with a barrage of frozen chicken legs, jumped on his back and bit him, then lobbed a telephone at him, deputies said. He ran to his car for refuge and Ms Richardson followed, threw the saw and cracked the windshield. Mr Garrett, 29, drove to his father's house and called the deputies.

Ms Richardson, 26, was charged with aggravated battery and throwing a deadly missile — the saw, not the chicken legs. (Reuters)

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Violence grows after settlers defy Netanyahu

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER
IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli Government was involved last night in increasingly desperate talks to defuse the confrontation over Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem.

Violence erupted after the Jewish-American millionaire at the centre of the storm took legal steps to try to prevent the eviction of Jews who have taken over two houses in the Palestinian suburb of Ras al-Amoud. About 300 Palestinians marched to the houses last night. They were turned back after scuffles with Israeli security men. There were also scuffles between Arabs and right-wing Jews coming to support the settlers.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, cancelled the second leg of a proposed trip to Europe. His visit to Hungary was scrapped after he abandoned plans to visit Romania. Amid Arab death threats



Moskowitz: enemy of the peace accord

and bitter criticism from Israelis resentful of his absentee status, Irving Moskowitz, a Miami-based businessman, emerged as the pivotal figure in a drama that Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, said could prompt "a very negative reaction" unless swiftly resolved. Mr Moskowitz, 70, a

confirmed enemy of the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord who has spent millions of dollars buying property for Jews in areas of east Jerusalem annexed by Israel after the 1967 war, appeared undeterred when he arrived at the disputed property under heavy guard.

As the former doctor arrived amid a posse of security men hired after Islamic Jihad vowed to kill him, one Jewish man triumphantly blew a ram's horn outside the houses at the centre of the dispute which is threatening to plunge the Holy Land into a new wave of violence. The horn is the traditional instrument that the Bible says the Israelites used to bring down the walls of Jericho.

Earlier, Mr Moskowitz had petitioned the Supreme Court to prevent the police from expelling the 11 Jewish settlers from the houses, which he claims to have bought legally



Israeli border police struggle to keep a crowd of Palestinian protesters from the two houses in east Jerusalem occupied by hardline settlers

and to be leasing to them. The court appeal came after the settlers had rejected a compromise which would have seen them replaced by Jewish semi-nary students. The compromise was also angrily rejected

by the Palestinians, who have given warnings of an "explosion" of public anger if the evictions are not ordered before tomorrow's regular weekly Muslim prayers. Moshe Peled, the Israeli

Deputy Education Minister, who had tried to mediate between Mr Moskowitz and Mr Netanyahu, urged the settlers to accept the compromise. "I am very afraid that if there is no agreement over

this, there will be a forcible evacuation," he said.

Up to 20 supporters of the ad hoc Land for Israel movement in the 120-member Knesset have vowed to try to bring down the Government if

the evacuation is ordered, claiming that it would contravene the essential platform of their movement: that Jews must be allowed to live anywhere in the biblical land of Israel.

Welcome for Fiji's return to fold

BY MICHAEL BINYON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

BRITAIN will strongly support Fiji's application to be readmitted to the Commonwealth at the Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh next month.

Derek Fatchett, a Foreign Office Minister of State, said after visiting the South Pacific island group that his discussions with political leaders had confirmed the Government's view that Fiji's adoption of a new constitution paved the way for a return to democracy, better relations between the ethnic communities and readmission to the 53-member Commonwealth.

Fiji's membership lapsed in 1987 after two coups instigated by General Sitiveni Rabuka, the present Prime Minister. With the support of the indigenous inhabitants he overthrew the democratically elected Government, dominated by ethnic Indians, who form almost half the 800,000 population. The new constitution removes discrimination enacted against them.

Fiji has retained the Union Flag as part of its national flag and remained loyal to the Queen.

Readmission would have to be by unanimous vote, but there are fears that resentment in Delhi may lead to an Indian veto.

There are several potential new applicants for Commonwealth membership. Yemen has made a formal bid and Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, has expressed interest. Mary Robinson, the outgoing President of Ireland, also spoke of her country's possible membership.

Britain's place in US hearts secure

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN
IN NEW YORK

AMERICANS see Britain as their country's second-best ally after Canada, according to an opinion poll published here, confirming that the "special relationship" is alive and well.

Of the 1,007 American adults surveyed by the Harris Poll organisation, 65 per cent described Britain as a "close ally", a number exceeded only by Canada, which scored a resounding 73 per cent. Britain's figures are up by 1 per cent from last year and by 7 per cent from their all-time low in 1994, when only 56 per cent of Americans believed that their transatlantic cousins were close allies.

Australia, France and Mexico followed behind Britain in the ally hierarchy, polling 48, 36 and 30 per cent respectively.

China, not surprisingly, emerges as the country viewed by Americans as the most unfriendly, with 60 per cent of those surveyed stating that Beijing was either "not friendly" or an "enemy". Only 6 per cent described China as a close ally. Russia was next, with 45 per cent expressing their continuing distrust of America's former Cold War adversary.

The most intriguing findings, however, pertain to Israel, another country with which America believes it has a special relationship. Israel is viewed as a close ally by only 29 per cent, with 32 per cent regarding it as unfriendly or worse. Only China and Russia rank higher than Israel in the unfriendliness stakes. Japan is seen as a close ally by only 21 per cent.

THE SUNDAY TIMES



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Dr Thomas Stuttford reports on dementia; the benefits of coffee; slimming pills and side-effects; chronic eye problems; and a new form of mammography

Hope for those who suffer in Alzheimer's shadow

Doctors interested in Alzheimer's disease have been meeting in Stockholm this week, ready for World Alzheimer's Day on Sunday. Alzheimer's costs the nation £11.5 billion a year, £1.5 billion of which comes directly from the NHS budget. In the UK, some 600,000 people suffer from Alzheimer's disease, which affects 5 per cent of the population at the age of 65, one in five at the age of 80, and one in four at 85. There are many causes of dementia in the elderly, but Alzheimer's accounts for 75 per cent of all cases.

It is a myth that all patients with Alzheimer's are elderly. Most are, but it has been reported in patients as young as 29, and is not infrequently seen in those in their fifties.

Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are seldom out of the news, and there are few people who do not know someone who is suffering from the disease. Indeed, one prominent sufferer is former American President Ronald Reagan.

As is well documented, it causes a progressive loss of memory and patients with it find it more difficult to reason, and therefore to make quick judgments.

This lack of flexibility and slowness of thought easily leads to panic, so well demonstrated by "Jonesie", the Boer War veteran in *Dad's Army*, apt to rush about achieving nothing as he shouted "Don't panic! Don't panic!". Corporal Jones also demonstrated the lack of attention to turn-out and other signs of a disintegrating personality.

Patients with Alzheimer's become confused about where they are, and

the time of day. It is a common experience that patients with dementia forget that they have told you the same story 20 minutes earlier, have asked you the same question five minutes before, and fail to recognise their old friends.

It is less often realised that they forget familiar landmarks and so can easily become lost on a once-familiar journey. Last year, my host kindly offered me a lift to a nearby town where I was due to give a lecture. As we climbed into the car, he told me that he had done this journey every day for 40 years.

Perhaps we talked too much, but it soon became all too apparent that he was lost.

Finally we made it to the lecture hall an hour and a half late. Thereafter I watched him carefully for the rest of the evening and it was obvious that he was showing many of the signs of early dementia. It was obvious to me because I was a stranger, but Alzheimer's is so insidious in its onset, as in this case, that it often goes undetected by those who live with the patient.

Suggestions that there are factors that may delay the onset of Alzheimer's usually produce angry responses from the carers of patients with the disease. A frequent theme is that the sufferer was an individual of great intelligence when younger, always taking a lively interest in the world, and that it is insulting to suggest that Alzheimer's comes on later in those with a high education, and who had refused to abandon intellectual pursuits in retirement.

The Organisation Research Into Ageing has been examining the effects of education and previous



Ronald Reagan is suffering from the severe memory loss that afflicts sufferers of Alzheimer's disease

occupation on brain-reserve capacity in old age, in particular the retention of vocabulary and an understanding of the abstract meanings of words. The survey showed that although these qualities are affected in everybody with Alzheimer's disease, patients whose interests were intellectual when they were younger do not show the symptoms of Alzheimer's quite as soon.

A spokesman for Research Into Ageing said: "Our investigations into this important aspect of the disease are continuing. It is true that those people who have had a good education do fare better, but it may be that they are only more skilled at coping

with and hiding their early symptoms."

There are many other projects investigating the possible factors affecting the time of onset of Alzheimer's disease. There is evidence, for instance, that a high cholesterol level is associated with an increased liability.

One of the more exciting research projects is on the effect of alcohol on Alzheimer's disease in later life. There appears to be an apparent reduction in the incidents of dementia, along with a greater alertness, in elderly patients who drink a modest amount. This may be the result of the higher levels of circulating oestrogen

found in those who enjoy a drink or two. Other studies have shown that HRT reduces the incidence of Alzheimer's.

Scope for research into Alzheimer's disease is endless, and with an ageing population it has obvious appeal. The Alzheimer's Research Trust has already collected more than £1 million in aid of a centre in Cambridge. Another £4 million is needed.

Alzheimer's Research Trust, Llanos House, Granthams Road, Cambridge CB2 5LQ (01223 843899).

Research Into Ageing, Baird House, 15-17 St. Cross Street, London EC1 (0171-404 6876).

Slimming pills and the heart

British, as opposed to American, overweight patients who have taken slimming pills as part of their weight reduction programme should not be too concerned about the voluntary withdrawal of Ponderax and Adifax from the chemist. In Britain it has always been considered bad medicine to give a cocktail of slimming drugs to treat obesity. Most doctors have also made it plain to patients that when slimming pills have been needed, they should have been taken only for a limited time.

Conversely, in America, even reputable doctors have commonly prescribed a combination of drugs. Diuramine, phentermine and Ponderax fenfluramine has been their favourite mixture, and it is this combination, which has caused the recent furore precipitated by the discovery that some patients who had taken it had developed heart disease.

Fortunately British doctors have always been expressly advised not to use a combination.

In August this year, the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that there was evidence that the Diuramine/Ponderax mixture might be associated with heart disease, in particular damage to the mitral and aortic valves which resulted in their incompetence. This term means that the valve no longer closes tightly and therefore leaks. This leaking, technically regurgitation, can be detected by echocardiography in 30 per cent of a group of patients who had been given this combination of drugs.

Once the heart valve leaks, the patient's heart has to work harder to compensate for the heart muscle's less efficient pumping action. In extreme cases, this lack of efficiency may cause the patient to be breathless, and suffer other signs of heart strain. The changes in the heart circulation can also result in a change from the sound of the heartbeat and the patient may develop a "murmur". There is some evidence to suggest that a

valvular incompetence brought on by slimming pill combination may regress with the passage of time, but hard evidence on what is this most unexpected side-effect is not yet available.

Abrupt withdrawal of slimming pills for a person who has been taking them for some weeks can induce side-effects, including depression.

Every case must be considered individually but it is suggested that the dose of Adifax should initially be reduced from two to one capsule a day for the week before it is stopped entirely and those who have been prescribed Ponderax should only take one every other day for a week, and then abandon the course.

Chemists will continue to keep stocks of the drug to enable this withdrawal regime to be implemented but will thereafter not supply either drug again. This complete withdrawal of these drugs is a precautionary measure and as yet there is no alarm about the situation in Britain.

There have been earlier reports of essential pulmonary hypertension, another form of cardiovascular disease, following the use of Ponderax, even when this drug was used by itself. In Britain, the best known sufferer of this lethal complication is Professor Julia Polak of Hammersmith Hospital in London, who needed a heart lung transplant. In America a few cases of valvular heart disease have been found in patients who have taken Adifax alone.

Even in the States those patients who are now suffering heart problems have on average taken the drugs for between six and 24 months. In Britain, a course of slimming pills was always restricted to three months.

People who have taken slimming pills and are worried are advised to see their doctor. If any abnormality, however trivial, is detected, they can be investigated by a specialist.

A helpline is available on 0800 980 7216.

In the UK, a course was restricted to three months

New breast screen gives better picture

MOST doctors are impressed by the results of the early intervention that is possible when breast cancer is detected by a mammography. The tumour may then be removed when it is so small that it cannot be felt with the hand.

Evidence is accumulating that shows regular screening saves lives. But one of the problems of mammography that doctors — but not patients — have always been aware of is that the interpretation of a mammogram requires considerable skill. This is particularly true the first time a woman has been screened, as there is no previous film with which to make a comparison.

Pulse magazine recently reported that a new form of mammography is about to be introduced. The new apparatus is scheduled to start working this month at the Royal Free Hospital in London. Called a scintimammogram, it will help doctors to make decisions in doubtful cases by picking up the presence of any malignant cells after they have been marked by a radioactive tracer that has been



Linda McCartney: had cancer

injected into the patient's foot. The scintimammogram will be particularly useful in patients with very dense breasts, such as those on hormone replacement treatment. And when a scintimammogram is used, the breast does not have to be so firmly squashed — this not only gives a better picture, but is also less uncomfortable for the patient.

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CHANGING TIMES

Caffeine is good for your health — after all

ALTHOUGH coffee and caffeine have traditionally had a bad press, this reputation is undeserved. In the past year or two, reputable medical journals have reported that caffeine can revive a flagging memory, can reduce accidents in night workers, can speed recovery from a cold and may even cut the suicide rate.

SGÖREN'S Syndrome is a chronic inflammatory disease which causes a marked dryness of the eyes, mouth and other mucous membranes. In many cases these symptoms are associated with arthritis. Although Sjögren's Syndrome is little known, it is more common than systemic lupus erythematosus but less often diagnosed than rheumatoid arthritis. As well as the dis-


At a conference in San Francisco earlier this year, a report from Professor Takayuki Shibamoto, of the University of California, showed that both regular and decaffeinated coffee contained antioxidants, the chemicals that may protect against some forms of heart disease and cancer.

Dry eyes that mask a problem

comfort caused by dry eyes, and the problems ranging from a lack of sense of taste and smell to dental decay, Sjögren's can cause more serious disease. Dryness in the respiratory tract can result in chronic bronchitis, even pneumonia, and it can also be involved in kidney disease, as

well as neurological problems affecting the nerves leading to the face and the eyes. In women the lining of the genital tract is also unusually dry. Dry eyes and mouth are usually regarded as the first symptoms of Sjögren's but a recent study reported in the *British Journal of Obstetrics*


and Gynaecology has shown that, on average, women with Sjögren's Syndrome develop a dry vagina eight years before they notice a dry eye. In a study of 240 women who had seen their gynaecologist about painful intercourse, seven were suffering from Sjögren's, and not from any psychological sexual dysfunction. They needed a lubricant rather than counselling.



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Times have caught up with politicians' wives and lives: Tony Blair and his wife Cherie; Michael Howard and his wife Sandra; Peter Lilley and his wife Gail; Neil Hamilton and his wife Christine

Political shadows

Silent, supportive and virtually invisible — except at election time. Who'd be a politician's partner? Mary Ann Sieghart reports

Once the stereotypical political partner was a pearl-necked typist in a Pugin-panelled office keeping the MP's secretarial allowance in the family; or a full-time wife and mother, perhaps, stoking the home fires back in the constituency. Either way she was loyal and able — and awfully good at opening fêtes.

But these days we have gay MPs with lovers claiming travel concessions; women MPs whose husbands, or long-term partners, are the supportive ones; and even a Prime Minister's wife with a bona fide career. It's not just the ruling party that has changed: times have caught up with Conservative politicians' wives and lives too.

For the stalwart Tory wives, of whom Neil Hamilton's wife Christine must be the patron saint, the realities of a future together in Opposition — or even out of Parliament altogether — are hard to adjust to. Sally Neubert, organiser of the Conservative Parliamentary Wives Association, suffered greatly when her husband, Sir Michael, was thrown out of Romford after 23 years. As far as she was concerned, the outcome of May 1 was "like a death in the family. You get so many letters, and all they lack is a black border around them."

But for Gail Lilley, wife of Peter Lilley, now the Shadow Chancellor but previously the Social Security Secretary in the Major Government, there has been a liberation in defeat. "I've had 14 years of put up and shut up and I just said to my husband the other day, 'self-sacrifice has stopped.' For all those years of Tory rule, Gail had to hold her tongue. 'Now it's over I can laugh about it, but I never talked about it at the time because I can't stand whingeing.'"

Gail, a successful artist and former fashion designer, recalls the sudden change in her life when her husband was first elected 14 years ago. "Suddenly there was no husband, just nothing. He would come in at midnight, two in the morning, four in the morning. Then you know you've been sidelined. They start to treat the home like a hotel and opt out of life."

Sometimes they're not even working. By phoning the number mysteriously labelled "Behind the Chair", she would find out if voting was going on late at night. "That way you'd know when they ought to be on their way home. But they're

not. They're milling around, scheming and plotting and chatting. At the beginning, it was actually quite devastating."

Being the wife of a minister, she says, was even worse. "I remember once I had to call for Peter at the Treasury. They loathe wives there — it's a very masculine place. The driver took me up to the private office. They said: 'You can sit there and wait for him.' And there was my husband's door and outside the door there was this little hard chair. It was just like waiting outside the headmaster's office."

Then, at the Department of Social Security, "he used to get these diaries and there'd be a dinner engagement, 7.30 for 8, and at the bottom it would say, 'Black tie, speech and Mrs Lilley'. That was where I came in the pecking order!"

Ministers' wives also have to absorb the abuse that is likely to come their husbands' way. Gail and Peter Lilley had their house daubed by fathers protesting about the Child Support Agency. "Then, several hours later, the single mothers came. Then we had the asylum-seekers. It's a lovely feeling now when I hear the news: 'The Government came under fire yesterday...' It has been harder for Peter, though. 'My husband's been in Parliament for 14 years and he's never been in Opposition, so there's this huge period of adjustment. He's like someone who's come out of long-term care.'"

Others tell similar stories. When former Home Secretary Michael Howard's new paper bleeped at a party soon after the election, he had no idea how to turn it off. "Didn't you have one when you were a minister?" asked his companion. "Yes," replied the Shadow Foreign Secretary, "but I had a man to carry it."

Rachael Maund, the wife of Andrew Robathan, another of only 165 Tories returned, has a different angle on her political partnership. As a City fund manager she feels "very fortunate to have my own career and my own life because

it's possible to get very wrapped up in your husband's career". But political wives who have careers of their own still have to make big compromises. For being an MP, and still more so a minister, takes precedence over everything else, as Rachael discovered when her baby Kit

Valley, has given up his associate directorship at a PR company to work for her at Westminster. The company car has gone, and the pay cut "has been a shock to my bank manager". Even his skills need brushing up. "Caroline thinks my filing is crap, and she's right." But he's happy with the arrangement. "It fulfils my ambition to help her politically. I can enjoy it without having tremendous status."

At least male political partners don't suffer from the Hillary Clinton syndrome: having to exaggerate their domesticity to make their lives seem less threatening to the general public. Hillary swapped cookie recipes during her husband's first presidential campaign, while Cherie Blair, who has a first-class degree and a career at the Bar, guest-edited *Prima* magazine. Some working wives feel let down by these compromises. Rachael Maund, for instance, says: "At the end of the day, Cherie Blair dropped everything to traipse round after her husband during the election campaign. She was never even allowed to open her mouth. What's the reason for

that, other than to look decorative?" Her favourite political wife is Gillian Clarke, Ken's wife, who makes no effort to look other than dowdy. "It's quite concerning," says Rachael, "that the British electorate can't accept a political leader with a working wife who doesn't look glamorous."

For a woman who never used to wear make-up or worry about her hair, Cherie has had to suffer more makeovers than British Airways. But other Labour spouses have it easier. Pauline Prescon, the Deputy Prime Minister's wife, has been allowed to keep her own brassy look and does not have to hold hands like the

arrangement. "I can enjoy it without having tremendous status."

Such public displays of affection make Gail Lilley's flesh crawl. During the Tory leadership election, she recalls: "Every time we were due on a photo call it was, 'Will you hold hands?' and I thought, 'What? I don't hold hands with my husband in public! Cherie Blair started all this. It's all her fault.'"

For both Gail and Sandra Howard, wife of Michael Howard, the Tory leadership election — what Gail refers to as "that little horror" — raised the possibility of playing opposite Cherie Blair as Shadow First Lady. For Sandra, "normal life seemed to be put on hold, really". She did not dare imagine what it would be like if Michael were chosen. Gail, however, admits she was worried that Peter might win. "I had a huge sense of humour failure when I thought of the ramifications."

Labour wives are discovering that they have their own problems now that their husbands are in office. Because their seats tend to be concentrated in the North of England and Scotland and Wales, they often see their spouses only at weekends. Maureen Ingram, whose husband Adam is now Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, lives near Glasgow. "Sometimes when they come back on a Friday and you've been running the show all week, they take charge and you have to bite your tongue," she says. Like other

new ministers' spouses, Maureen is having to adjust. "I see less of him now. He used to be home on Thursday evening, now he's not back till Friday afternoon. Then he does his boxes at the weekend and the phone's always ringing. It's only been ten weeks but it feels like ten years."

Red boxes — which contain work for ministers to do at home — are the bane of the spouse's life. Gail Lilley remembers five of them arriving on their first Bank Holiday together after Peter became a minister. One wife of a new senior Cabinet minister says that waking up to discover that your husband has been appointed to government ought to be classed for stressfulness alongside moving house, bereavement and divorce. Another new minister found that, initially, his young children loved opening the boxes. Now, when he can't play football with them because he has too much work, they say: "Why can't Tony Blair do his own boxes?"

David Mills, husband of Tessa Jowell, Minister of State at the Department of Health, says: "They're an absolute bloody nuisance. She gets up at 5.30 each morning to do her boxes. It's ruining my sleep pattern." One solution to the time problem is to enter the House yourself. That is what Julie Kirkbride has done. Newly married to Andrew MacKay, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, she is now Conservative MP for Bromsgrove. "Being at the House of Commons makes it more convenient because I see more of him. Before, I was up in Bromsgrove and he was down at Westminster."

In becoming an MP, Julie has managed to avoid the biggest irritation, being treated as an appendage. Some wives refused to be interviewed for this piece for that very reason. Even Rachael Maund, who enjoys her life, admits: "I got fed up to the back teeth with people asking, 'What's it like being an MP's wife?' I used to say, 'Why don't you ask what's it like being an investment manager's husband?'" Indeed.

© Mary Ann Sieghart is an assistant editor of *The Times*

This is an edited version of an article in next month's *Vogue*



TOMORROW

"We are loyal to each other in the fullest sense of the word," Dorian Jabri, partner of Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, talks for the first time about their private and political partnership

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Time to stop the Third World debt treadmill

Gordon Brown must take a lead at the IMF, says James Callaghan

This week the finance ministers of the world are meeting in Hong Kong under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, arrives there tomorrow.

The occasion will be highly symbolic. It will remind China that the world expects her to keep to her undertakings that the recent handover will not lead to any weakening of Hong Kong's present financial integration into the rest of the world.

But much more than symbolism will be at stake. The finance ministers will also need to decide how to give practical effect to the pledges made by their heads of government in Denver last June, that there would be "new, concrete action" to support Africa in overcoming the abject poverty and near economic collapse of some of the sub-Saharan countries.

Consider the grim facts. The World Bank estimates that in 1993, no fewer than 250 million people were existing on less than a dollar (65p) a day. In Mozambique, weekly average earnings were as low as £1.15. Is it any wonder that the average Mozambican can expect death to come when they are no more than 47 years old?

There is no single cause for abject poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank lists among others: inadequate access to land and capital, poor access to credit, poor access to proper health and education, bad policies, excess arms purchases, and so on. And there is one other vital cause — debt — in which these countries are deeply mired in an impossible overhang.

Mozambique, for example, spends 8 per cent of its annual budget on education, and 3 per cent on health, but as much as 33 per cent on debt repayments to the West. It is on these points that the finance ministers' meeting in Hong Kong can make a breakthrough by recognising publicly that much of this debt will never be repaid, and that some of the countries concerned will never be able to hush themselves up by their own bootstraps without further assistance. If they would say that, it would be a start in redeeming the Denver pledge made by the heads of government.

And it would be a concession to reality. It is little short of folly that every year our Parliament votes funds for the purpose of developing sub-Saharan Africa's economic and social structure, and every year the recipients use equivalent funds to pay the interest owed to their creditors. In Mozambique, the equivalent of 90 per cent of each year's financial aid from the West has until recently been devoted to debt repayment, though this has now been reduced to 67 per cent. In Zambia, the figure is

70 per cent. Overall, the figure is about 60 per cent. These countries are walking a treadmill — walking, walking and never making any progress. We must all step off this crazy merry-go-round.

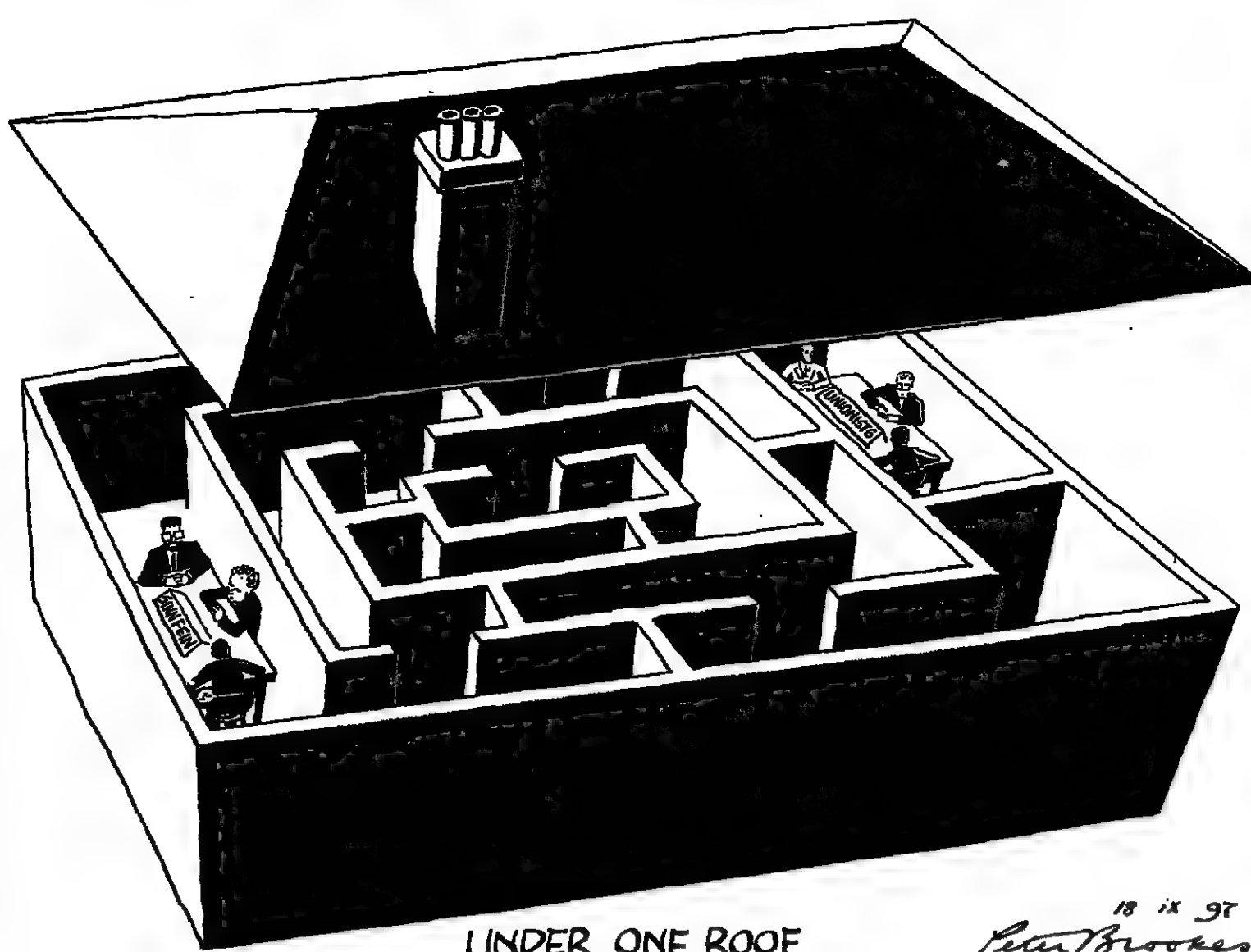
The World Bank has come forward with a welcome scheme which would provide further relief — the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative. It could be a useful tool, but the relief is too slow in coming, the present conditions are too strict, and the number of countries which will benefit is too few.

Now, a coalition of churches, charitable institutions and others, calling itself Jubilee 2000, has come forward with an inspired call to celebrate the millennium with a one-off cancellation of the backlog of unpayable debt. It is a bold and imaginative idea. If it is to become realistic, then the recipient countries must tie the ensuing relief to firm plans to use the funds to improve their economic infrastructure and to effective expenditure on better health and more education. Economic and social conditions must be created in which private investment will flow as willingly to the sub-Saharan as it does to other countries in the developing world.

Gordon Brown has said that he shares many of the objectives of Jubilee 2000 and that he will press his colleagues to provide further relief. He faces a tough task. Germany, the United States and Japan have been dragging their feet over implementing the new HIPC initiative. They will need a lot of shifting. Yet a few weeks ago the IMF, with considerable help from Japan, could mobilise \$16.7 billion to stabilise the currency problems of Thailand and South East Asia, while a third of that sum could do much to redeem the poor of Africa and Latin America from debt. This could be the "new, concrete action" promised at Denver.

Church leaders have reminded us that Britain did not hesitate to give a lead to the world in the 19th century when we led the abolition of slavery — against the consensus of our economic competitors. How much would it cost Britain today to give a lead to other countries by offering bilateral relief to the poorest countries now indebted to our Export Credit Guarantees Development? Is it too much for us bilaterally and the world as a whole to lift the slavery of debt from the shoulders of the world's poorest? A decision by the nations in Hong Kong to do this in the year 2000 would give us all a genuine reason to celebrate the new millennium.

Lord Callaghan of Cardiff was Prime Minister, 1976-79, and was among the first to raise the issue of Third World debt.



UNDER ONE ROOF

A system in the dock

The Shirley Porter case is gravely prejudiced even before it comes to court

It is not difficult to get justice for someone who is already a well-loved public figure. It is harder for someone who is unpopular and has been subject to years of press and political attacks. On October 2, which is the day of the Jewish New Year, the hearing of what can be called the Shirley Porter case will begin in the Divisional Court. The central question will be whether she and her fellow respondents have so far been given a fair trial.

The original events occurred in 1986. The subsequent allegation was that the housing policies in Westminster amounted to illegal gerrymandering. There were originally ten respondents. All of them have suffered great damage to their lives. Two of them have been totally destroyed; one, who might have been exonerated, committed suicide, the other — a council officer of medium rank — has had a profound nervous breakdown and is in hospital.

The central respondent is Dame Shirley Porter, formerly leader of Westminster City Council, and once the most prominent Conservative in London. I had dealings with her on behalf of the Arts Council over Westminster's arts funding. In the brain of the 1980s she was one of the three or four council leaders most enthusiastic for the arts. She was both a dominant personality and a self-publicist. I had no doubt she was effective, and the arts benefited.

No one questions that Shirley Porter has been the object of prejudice. She is Jewish, and subliminal anti-Semitism is part of British culture, on the left as well as on the right. Another Jewish woman in politics has been Edwina Currie; I think both women have been regarded by some people as "pushy Jewish ladies with big mouths". Lady Porter is a fighter, seen as a disciple and to some extent a lesser version of Margaret Thatcher. She suffered from the anti-Thatcher backlash. She was the daughter of Jack Cohen, the founder of Tesco, so she also suffers from the envy that attaches to great wealth. She was the woman who, more than anyone else, made Westminster the flagship of Conservative local government. The Labour Party regarded her as a legitimate target, though some of its attacks were wildly inaccurate.

Press and television have been very interested in the case, and have scarcely tried to be impartial. Many programmes and articles have sim-

ply seen Lady Porter as a villainess, neglecting an open-minded examination of the case for the Westminster housing policy. The *Evening Standard* has been largely hostile; as has BBC Television, going back to an early *Panorama* exposé, which relied on local objectors who were Lady Porter's political opponents. The media added to the prejudice.

The hearing in the Divisional Court is itself a peculiar one. It is an appeal by five of the remaining six of the respondents — the sixth being too ill to join — "to quash the decision of the auditor, at the audits of accounts of Westminster City Council for 1987-88 to 1994-95 to certify that the sum of £31,677,044 is due from the appellants". Although the hearing takes the form of an appeal, this is in fact the first judicial hearing. The auditor is John Magill, though a senior partner of Deloitte & Touche, the City accountancy firm, he has no legal training or qualification. The present appeal is against his findings based on his inquiry.

The procedure Mr Magill followed did have statutory authority under the Local Government Finance Act 1982, though a fairer alternative procedure is available under that Act. In the recent third report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, paragraph 215, Lord Nolan commented: "We also received widespread criticism of the procedure followed in certain surcharge cases under which the auditor formulates and prosecutes the case, judges guilt or innocence, and determines the penalty on the basis of his own calculations of financial loss. We can say immediately that we can see no justification at all for the retention of that procedure." Even the Audit Commission itself accepts that "in all cases the auditor should make a case to the court", rather than make the adjudication himself. This type of procedure has also been rejected for courts martial by the European Court of Human Rights.

The issue is one of separation of function. Mr Magill acted as investi-

gator, with powers to compel evidence; as jury, in that he decided guilt or innocence; and as judge, in that he presided over the proceedings and decided the penalty. The only role he did not fill was that of defendant. He himself observed that his functions were "judicial" or "quasi-judicial", though he may not have behaved judicially. This extreme confusion of functions is plainly contrary to natural justice. It was made far worse by Mr Magill's prejudicial use of publicity.

The alleged loss of £31 million seems more of a slighting shot than a realistic estimate. Councils normally improve their revenue by the sale of council houses at a discount, a policy widely adopted and unquestionably lawful; the additional cost of rehousing was not estimated to exceed £1.5 million a year. The programme was, in fact, a failure, and rather few houses were sold; the net financial difference, plus or minus, is more likely to have been measured in hundreds of thousands of pounds than in millions. The cost of the inquiry to date has been about £3 million; if the object was to save public money, it has not been achieved.

On January 13, 1994, Mr Magill did something which seems to be unprecedented, and is open to serious objection. He held a televised press conference to issue his preliminary report. At that point he had only completed his initial inquiry; he had not heard the defence submissions in answer to the charges he formulated. He did not know what the defence would say. Most of the respondents had had no legal representation during his investigation. Yet his findings were damning; because he called the press and television conference, they were widely reported.

He read the most prejudicial paragraph straight to camera: "My provisional view is that the council was engaged in gerrymandering, which I am minded to find is a disgraceful and improper purpose, and not a purpose for which a local

authority may act." Is this Detective Inspector Magill. Prosecuting Counsel Magill. Foreman of the Jury Magill or Judge Magill speaking?

How unsatisfactory these highly publicised provisional findings were is demonstrated by something Mr Magill said later: "I shall consider any representations which are made to me before making any findings of fact, before reaching any final views, and before making any decision in consequence of this objection." If he had been a lawyer, Mr Magill would have realised that his preliminary findings, couched in such dramatic terms, totally prejudiced the impartiality of his "final views". It is a case of execution first, defence later.

Worse than that, Section 30 of the 1982 Act, of which Mr Magill was aware, made it a criminal offence for him, or anyone else, to reveal any information obtained by his procedures under the Act. That provision is intended to prevent the very prejudice which Mr Magill created. On indictment such a breach of confidentiality is punishable by "imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years". Any-one reading his provisional findings would have formed a painfully clear view of the evidence as Mr Magill saw it. Yet Mr Magill blandly observes that "there is nothing in this statement which involves the disclosure of information obtained in the course of my audit". It is amazing that anyone, however unfamiliar with the law, could have come to that conclusion.

The merits of the original policy, even its legality, remain open to debate, though it was far from unique to Westminster; the alleged cost seems fanciful but is a legitimate matter for discussion; Shirley Porter will never be a popular woman. But the ten respondents have suffered a wholly unjust form of adjudication, now rightly repudiated by the European Court of Human Rights, the Audit Commission and Lord Nolan. One of the respondents killed himself because of it, one was driven mad, all have been gravely damaged. John Magill chose the more egotistical procedure under the 1982 Act and compounded its inherent injustice by his resort to sensational publicity. He should never again be employed in any quasi-judicial capacity.

The Divisional Court comes to a case distorted by an almost unique degree of prejudice. It will remember that a wholly unjust procedure cannot produce a reliably just result.

William Rees-Mogg

Labour's welfare muddle

Rivalry and reform don't mix, says

Iain Duncan Smith

At last week's TUC conference the Prime Minister once again talked of his "radical modern vision" for reforming Britain. Before the election Mr Blair made it clear that welfare reform was a key objective for new Labour and once in power he appointed Frank Field as the Minister of State for Welfare Reform. Yet almost five months has passed, and far from there being a clear process of reform, there is confusion in all aspects of the Government's social security review.

For example, Gordon Brown has taken upon himself the responsibility for analysing the prospect of integrating tax and benefits from the DSS, by establishing a separate taskforce run by Martin Taylor. The Chancellor of the Exchequer believes "many of the barriers to integration in the past — both administrative and ideological — have gone".

Yet Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, has always made it clear that she has ideological objections to such a sweeping reform because of the way the benefit is delivered, namely to the wage-earner through PAYE. This means that, for instance, non-working women would not receive benefits directly, but through their husbands' wage packets. For Ms Harman such a reform would be regressive. But it is becoming more and more difficult to know where she stands. Before the election she attacked Conservative plans to reduce benefit to lone mothers. Yet within two months of taking office she implemented them.

Furthermore, Mr Field has said he is against merging tax and benefits, which is the Chancellor's "Holy Grail". He wants to eliminate means-testing, which he has described as "the enemy within the welfare state". Having been asked by the Prime Minister to produce a reform package, he now finds himself undermined by the Chancellor's proposals and his Secretary of State's subservience to the Treasury.

Surely, with Mr Field's track record on welfare reform, which is the reason for his appointment, one might expect all these reviews to be overseen by him and then by the Secretary of State. Yet this is not the case. Furthermore, it is now apparent that the blueprint Mr Field has produced has gone straight to the Prime Minister.

This lack of co-ordination between the Secretary of State and her Minister of State was underlined during the summer recess, when Mr Field spoke about devolving social security budgets and regionalising benefit payments. When these proposals were criticised by some Labour MPs, Ms Harman made no comment in support of her minister or his proposals.

Then there is the question of pension reform, over which ministers have got themselves in another mess. Mr Field's stakeholder scheme, praised by the Prime Minister, has been dealt a body blow by the Chancellor. Mr Brown's decision to abolish tax relief on dividends for pension funds has strengthened Serps, the state earnings-related pension scheme. Yet Mr Field's well-publicised scheme requires the abolition of Serps. Given that fact, it is not surprising that John Denham, an Under-Secretary at the DSS, has been running this area of reform and that Mr Field has not been allowed to answer questions on pension reform on the floor of the Commons.

During the summer there were press reports that civil servants had been asked to prepare a paper on how the link between pensions and earnings could be restored. This enabled Barbara Castle, a champion of pensioners, to look pleased. However, another Social Security Minister, Baroness Hollis of Heigham, denied that this was even an option.

The confusion over welfare policies was compounded as Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio, continued his search for a proper job during the summer and removed another potential responsibility from the DSS, by launching a new social exclusion unit which will apparently work to tackle poverty. It is unclear what this unit will actually do, but what is clear is that Labour's official welfare team will not be responsible, as it will be run from the Cabinet Office.

Labour seems to be pulling in different directions over welfare reform, from greater compulsion in pension contributions to ending or keeping means-testing. The disquiet is not engineered by the Opposition, but at the very top of the parliamentary party. Reforming the welfare state and society was much talked about by Tony Blair before the election, but it is becoming increasingly unclear what his vision is, and who will be responsible for implementing it. While it is wise to spread responsibilities, it is wrong to scatter them; such a process can lead only to confusion. The present confusion reveals the absence of a "radical modern vision". What we have instead is the product of competing ministerial ambitions. Too many cooks is a recipe for chaos.

The author is Shadow Secretary of State for Social Security.

New Penny

AS Ian McEwan celebrates his secret second marriage, his former wife is forging her own literary career — spurred on, she claims, by financial necessity.

Penny Allen is crafting a series of literary works, several of which paint an unflattering portrait of husband behaviour, the first of which will be out in November.

The celebrated author and his wife appeared to lead a blissful life at their Oxford home, raising four children during their 21 years

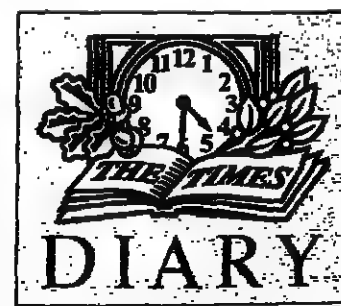
together (14 as man and wife), but in 1995 Ms Allen petitioned for divorce on the grounds of McEwan's unreasonable behaviour. They live separately in Oxford, to be near their two school-age children.

The short stories, says Miss Allen, address a range of troubling issues, supposedly drawn from her "well of experience". One revolves around a hospital delivery room, where a man brings a former lover to watch his wife give birth, while another concerns a man's extravagant sexual appetites.

Ms Allen, a meditation expert, claims she has taken up her pen out of need. "When you are living in Oxford, with two children, on little money, you have to turn your mind to these things."

She says the terms of her divorce settlement leave her no choice but to stay in Oxford. "I want to be near the children, so I have to stay in Oxford even though it is prohibitively expensive to live here."

Friends of McEwan insist that he is a generous character who has done everything to provide for his children. His office was discreet, saying Ms Allen's observations were a "purely personal matter".



● ASKED what he makes of Wee Willie Hague's penchant for wearing baseball caps — presumably a frantic attempt to boost his blokeish credentials — his defeated Tory leadership challenger, Ken Clarke, was clear: "I favour a trilby."

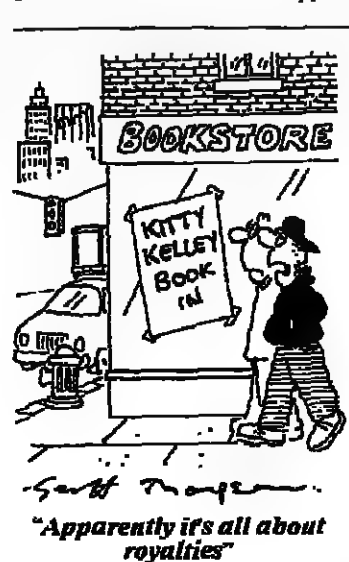
Clearly Hurd

LATEST firecracker to be hurled at the House of Windsor comes, strangely, from that master of tact — Lord Hurd of Westwell. While eulogising the late Princess of Wales in *Prospect* magazine, the former Foreign Secretary rather, well, puts his well-shod foot in it. "I knew one side of her — a Princess anxious for help and advice... I have glowing memories of time spent with her," he reflects, before adding: "She was much easier to

help and advise than some other members of the Royal Family."

Good heavens

God, the theme park. In America, naturally, they will celebrate the 2,000th birthday of Jesus by building the world's first biblical theme park. The £250 million project — rivaling our Millennium Dome — will boast a mechanised cast; a robotic Christ will walk on water and android Disciples will talk to each other at the Last Supper.



And in a tribute to Darwinism, this man-made edifice at Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, will be called God's Wonderful World. Uh oh.

● SO grand, these Labour types. Lord Irvine of Lairg, Lord Chancellor, often eats oranges at his desk. So as not to soil his delicate hands, he asks a civil servant to peel them.

White mischief

AMONG those who believed that Black Wednesday was in fact White Wednesday include even members of that family of rampaging Europhilias, the Garel-Joneses. It transpires that Lord G-J, who pushed Maastricht through, has interesting observations five years on from the day the pound crashed out of the ERM. "One of my sons in the City seems to have done quite well out of Black Wednesday," says the lugubrious lord. "I asked him if patriotism had sort of crept into his thoughts," he will tell the forthcoming Channel 4 programme *Bye Bye Blues*. His son's response, it seems, was more pragmatic than principled.

Acting up

AN odd complaint, Patsy Kensit.



Patsy: stage ambitions

the comely wife of the Oasis musician Liam Gallagher, claims she is tired of her image as a "rockstar babe", which has stunted her career. "It's a real pity because I want to act. I haven't been on stage since I was 16," says Mrs Gallagher, whose career started promisingly in *Absolute Beginners*. A loss, indeed. But Patsy surely might be taken a little more seriously as an actress and a little less seriously as a rock chick if she were not already well into her third rock-star marriage — at the grand old age of 29.

P.H.S



Penny Allen: telling all



BRIGHT WEDNESDAY

History lessons Blair must not be allowed to forget

It is fitting that the best combination of economic figures seen in Britain for more than two decades should have been published on the fifth anniversary of Black Wednesday. The pound's humiliating expulsion from the European exchange-rate mechanism in September 1992 destroyed the authority of John Major's Government and may have doomed his party, but for the British people it turned out to be an unqualified boon.

By unshackling the pound from the German mark and thereby releasing the British Government from the need to follow economic policies made in Frankfurt, the events of Black Wednesday were directly responsible for the strong economic growth and the steady reduction in unemployment which started within months of Britain's withdrawal from the ERM. In the same five years, Germany and France sank ever deeper into the morass of mass unemployment. This is a history lesson which the Labour Government must not be allowed to forget.

In a timely reminder of the benefits of the currency flexibility restored on Black Wednesday, the Office for National Statistics yesterday announced another large reduction in unemployment. The official jobless count now stands at just 5.3 per cent of the workforce, the lowest level in 17 years. And even allowing for the many changes in benefits, retirement arrangements and part-time working, independent authorities, ranging from the Bank of England to the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, concur that unemployment is now less of a problem in Britain than in any other major Western economy with the exception of the United States.

More remarkably still, the new British jobs have not been bought at the cost of high inflation, unbalanced trade or permanent currency devaluation. Mr Major grimly prophesied on the eve of Black Wednesday that a floating pound would produce "rising prices, rising wages, rising inflation and a long-term deterioration in Britain's competi-

tiveness". None of this has come to pass. Inflation remains little higher than in Germany and France, despite the fact that unemployment there is almost double the British level. Britain's exports and imports are in balance, despite the fact that we are enjoying a consumer boom, while Europe remains in recession. Even the pound, after helping to revive the economy by floating downwards, has now regained its earlier strength against the mark and French franc.

Yet despite such apparently conclusive demonstrations of the benefits of monetary independence, there are powerful voices in the business community and in all of the major political parties demanding that the power over Britain's money should again be transferred to Frankfurt and that sterling should again be shackled, this time to the euro instead of the mark. The calls for Britain to rejoin the ERM, or even to commit itself to future membership of the European monetary union, may at present be scarcely audible. But with Britain preparing to take over the EU presidency, the murmurs from Euro-enthusiastic businessmen, diplomats and ministers will turn into loud insistence that only by committing himself to EMU can Tony Blair play a constructive part in the single currency debate.

With history and economics so clearly ranged against them, the advocates of a European single currency will resort to political claims. Mr Blair will be told that by staying out of EMU he will lock Britain out of the leadership of Europe; and that by promising to join EMU he could put Britain on a par with Germany and France and raise himself from mere national politician to statesman on the European stage. When he hears such talk of "slow lanes" and "second-class" Euro-citizenship, Mr Blair should recall another of Mr Major's prophecies just before Black Wednesday. To take the pound out of the ERM, the former Prime Minister said, would be "to accept that Britain will be forever second-rate in Europe". Mr Blair should look at the economic figures and reflect on the fickleness of political fate.

HIT AND MISS

Air traffic control is an accident waiting to happen

The mid-air collision of two German and American military aircraft hundreds of miles off the coast of Angola with the loss of all on board is more than a human tragedy. It is a deadly indictment of the chaotic state of air traffic control over the entire African continent, and a warning that the present method of regulating air traffic around the globe is seriously inadequate.

The chances of two planes hitting each other over a remote part of the South Atlantic would seem infinitesimal. It is unclear why the planes were on the same flight path, why they had no warning of the other's approach and why ground controllers have no record of the crash. What is quite clear, however, is that the deficiencies of communications systems in most of Africa mean that pilots now fly over the continent virtually blind. Few air controllers have the right equipment, speak passable English or monitor traffic responsibly. Overflying charges are pocketed by corrupt governments and not spent on computers and radar. In July alone, Angolan air traffic control reported 12 near misses; the figure for Chad was 16. South African Airways is even considering a return to the longer route to Europe around West Africa that it was obliged to fly during sanctions. Air safety will be an urgent issue at the regional meeting in Ghana this week of the International Federation of Airline Pilots Associations.

Africa is not the only continent causing concern. In the past few weeks there have been two extremely serious near misses over Heathrow: in one, the planes missed each other by some 300ft, or less than a second's flying time. Figures show that the skies over Western Europe are becoming ever more crowded: air controllers are reporting intolerable levels of stress with virtually no dip in peak traffic periods. World forecasts point to

a 6.6 per cent growth in air traffic in the next four years, with the number of international and domestic scheduled passengers rising to 1.8 billion by 2001.

Luckily, there has not been a corresponding rise in collisions or near misses. But American air controllers are sufficiently alarmed that they have launched an experiment to see whether there are safer ways of directing planes than through narrow and carefully regulated corridors. Pilots, relying on on-board navigation and the satellite-directed Global Positioning System, set their own course and simply keep ground control informed, rather than relying on ground control to maintain safe separation. In future, most planes will be equipped with the Future Air Navigation System, already in use in Australasia, which will give pilots freedom to plot their course.

Until then, air safety could be improved in several ways. The first obvious change is to widen the corridors and open up vast areas still reserved for military traffic. Fighter jets must also be banned from all civilian routes: some 25 per cent of all near misses last year involved military aircraft, and yesterday two American jets on routine training flights collided off the coast of New Jersey. Petty chauvinist insistence, especially in Europe, on national control of all national airspace should give way to more pooling and co-operative arrangements, as happens in much of Northern Europe where traffic is controlled from one centre in Maastricht. And the rush of all pilots to the same narrow altitude band over the Atlantic where they hope to pick up the best winds and save fuel and time should be more strictly regulated. Airlines have done much to assure passengers that their planes are safe; much more must be done if that assurance is to extend to the skies as well.

ART SENSATION

Young British artists are traditionally challenging tradition

The purpose of any new art movement—in so far as it can be said to have a purpose—is to unsettle and challenge. Boldness and confrontation are the essence of the avant garde. It accosts its viewers with the radical and inflammatory—and for that reason is often difficult to understand. Not since the arrival of the Pop generation in Britain has tradition been more flagrantly flouted than by today's young British artists whose work, as it has been collected and promoted by Charles Saatchi, is now on show at the Royal Academy of Arts.

Flaunting its ability to spark controversy, this show has been given the provocative title *Sensation*. And this is exactly what it has caused. Over the past weeks, attempts to ban the showing of Marcus Harvey's *Myra*—a representation of a notorious Myra Hindley photograph painted in children's handprints—have rampaged hysterically through the media. Last week the distinguished sculptor Michael Sandle resigned in protest and other academicians have threatened to follow.

The visitor, however, should keep an open mind. Some of the exhibits in this show may seem rapid or imitative—more reliant on

the depth of feeling and philosophy which informs the best art. But many of the pieces focus an unflinching lens on a contemporary world of violence and cruelty, depravity and despair, boredom and waste. Their sharp images cut a direct path to the emotions.

Nor is the work on display limited to the brutal culture of a disillusioned generation. Charles Saatchi has a broadly catholic taste. His collection ranges from the severe minimalist abstraction of Jason Martin and Simon Callery to the abrupt explicitness of Ron Mueck's oedipal *Dead Dad*. It extends from the figurative traditions of Jenny Saville's painterly female nudes, to the monumentality of Rachel Whiteread's unornamented sculptures.

Displayed within the context of the academy's Georgian halls, these works acquire a paradoxically historic resonance. New British artists forge their links with tradition even as they strive to break them. The work of the contemporary era may be brazen, cheeky, ironic and rude; it may challenge preconceptions of what constitutes art. This is, after all, what the avant garde has always meant. The new British contemporaries have earned their place in the academy's annals.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Opportunities and dangers in the 'new voice' for Wales

From Mr Siôn Cowell

Sir, Now is the time for all who live in Wales to lay aside doubts and reservations and come out and vote resolutely "yes" for a Welsh assembly.

Margaret Thatcher used to say people should stand on their own feet. And prominent Conservatives are taking her at her word. Sir Wyn Roberts, Conservative MP for Conwy from 1970 until the last election, is actually calling for an assembly with stronger powers. Others, including Viscount St Davids, are joining their countrymen in Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru in calling for a strong "yes" vote.

Scotland has voted overwhelmingly "yes". Soon London will be voting for its own regional government. The English regions may well follow the London lead. Can we in Wales afford to be left behind?

The choice is not between an assembly for Wales and the status quo. The status quo has changed irrevocably with the Scottish "yes". Tony Blair is right. Things can no longer stay as they are. The choice on September 18 is quite simply a choice between a new voice for Wales and being left out in the cold.

The process of devolution began long ago, with the creation of the Welsh Board of Education in 1907. It continued with the appointment of the first Welsh Secretary in 1964 and the creation of the Welsh Office in 1965. A Welsh Government already exists. A Welsh assembly is simply another step in the process.

A Welsh assembly will not create a new bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is already there. But a "yes" vote will ensure this bureaucracy is democratically accountable to us who live in Wales. This happens everywhere else in Europe. Why not in Wales?

Yours faithfully,
SION COWELL
(Press Officer, Yes for Wales—Anglesey Campaign),
Plas Maelog, Beaumaris, Anglesey.
September 15.

From Lord Renton

Sir, William Rees-Mogg writes a more than usually woeeful piece today ("Revenge of the Celtic fringe", September 15), prophesying that devolution and the European movement between them may be the end of the English nation.

Has he ever paused to think that if such an unlikely event were ever to happen, his own constant and acerbic anti-Europeanism would be a contributory cause?

The Scots are much less frightened

Race-hate case

From His Honour Judge Bathurst Norman

Sir, I greatly dislike making any comment about a case which I have tried, but since at least one MP has rushed to criticise me for excessive leniency in the case of *Regina v Atkinson* ("Neo-Nazi jailed for hate-filled magazines", report, September 12), I think it right to do so.

The maximum sentence laid down by Parliament for the offence of publishing material intended thereby to stir up racial hatred is two years' imprisonment. I stated this in passing sentence and made it clear that, in my view, that sentence was too low.

Judges are bound to implement the will of Parliament.

Yours faithfully,
G. BATHURST NORMAN,
The Crown Court at Southwark,
1 English Grounds, Southwark, SE1.
September 12.

Russian visas

From the Ambassador of the Russian Federation

Sir, Your newspaper has long given particular attention to seemingly the only problem in Russian-British relations, which is visa practices.

We understand the feelings of Mr Michael Lewis, whose letter was published on September 10. We also are painfully aware of a great number of grievances of Russian citizens who apply for visas, often with no success, to the British Embassy in Moscow.

We have had consultations with the relevant British authorities on the subject. The Russian side is ready and willing to simplify visa procedures. But it takes two to tango.

Yours sincerely,
YURI FOKINE,
Embassy of the Russian Federation,
13 Kensington Palace Gardens, W8.

Stopped clocks

From Mr Ian Hall

Sir, Commander Jenkins (letter, September 15) will be pleased to know that the inhabitants of County Cork are still anxious to be helpful to visitors.

The entrance to the self-catering accommodation in which we stayed earlier this year was fitted with a security lock. For our benefit a notice had been taped to the glass saying: "To operate lock, press buttons 2 and 4 together then press 3." An addendum said: "If you still can't open the door, the one at the end of the corridor is not locked."

Yours faithfully,
IAN HALL,
The Cottage, Lower Snowden,
Burnhill Green, South Staffordshire.
September 16.

of Europe than the English. The "auld alliance" may have something to do with this, but more important is their knowledge of how small countries such as Ireland have prospered in the European Union. They found the bitter Euroscepticism of so many Tories in the last election unreal, and they threw out our remaining MPs.

If we are to have a reasonable prospect of holding together a devolved Britain, it must be on the basis of English, Scots, Welsh and Ulstermen working together, with our partners on the Continent, to achieve an economic and monetary union that respects nations but provides sufficient strength to withstand global competition in the next century. A hard but not impossible objective.

This is the aim of the French and Spanish, both old nations. It must be the aim of England and Scotland as well.

Yours truly,

TIM RENTON,
House of Lords.
September 15.

From Mr Keith Brighouse

Sir, William Rees-Mogg is right to point out the dangers to England from a Celtic-dominated Government that is clearly shooting from the hip.

With the Scots and the Welsh enthusiastically defining themselves, the English are being defined by default. Perhaps it is time for the English to stop seeing themselves as British and reaffirm their own national identity.

Those people in England who believe in the United Kingdom should accept the battle to keep Britain together is lost and should now fight to stop the regionalisation of England. This carving-up of England will not mean more democracy, as the Government would have us believe, but will neuter English identity. Not only will the English have to pay for unnecessary new bureaucracies, they will be powerless to object to subsidising the collectivisation of Scotland and Wales.

Given the vagaries of this Government in regard to a future constitutional settlement and its reluctance to accept that the English have a vital interest in any changes, an independent England doesn't sound a bad idea.

Sincerely,
KEITH BRIGHOUSE,
21 Galskell House,
Victoria Avenue, E6.

From Mr Andrew Lambert

Sir, Wales is at present dysfunctional. There is an unconsecrated marriage

between the Establishment (the "Taffia") and the Welsh Office; initiatives are strangled at birth; and Europe's oldest living language faces a slow death.

To avoid obliteration Wales must follow Scotland's example.

Yours in desperation,
ANDREW LAMBERT,
Flat 3, 19 Mason's Yard,
St James's, SW1.
September 17.

From Mr Ray Kingdon

Sir, I am Welsh and live in Cardiff, and thus feel obliged to vote in favour of a Welsh assembly. This obligation hangs heaviest over us non-Welsh speakers; after all, here is a chance to prove our "Welshness". There is no logic in this, just blind nationalistic duty.

However, a recent holiday experience has helped bring me back to my senses. In August I took walking holidays in three different areas: South Pennines, North York Moors and Snowdonia. I shared drinks and jokes in Halifax, Bakewell and Sheffield but in North Wales hostels backs were rudely turned and the locals spoke exclusively in Welsh.

These "sons of Harlech" seemed very pro Welsh assembly. No wonder: it's ultimately designed for them. It is simply not designed for me.

Cardiff has much more in common with Bristol than Bangor. The people of Cardiff are more like Liverpudlians than Llangollenites. Voting "yes" is a step away from Englishness and towards Welshness. Watch your step Cardiff!

Yours etc,
RAYMOND L. KINGDON,
77 Heathway, Cardiff.
ray@dysselp.demon.co.uk
September 10.

From Mr Paul Keenan

Sir, The question asked of the Welsh in the coming referendum is the same as asking a hungry man: "Would you like to eat today?" It does not offer a menu, it does not indicate a cost, but it is designed to prompt the answer "yes" without the thought of such details.

The Government should stop stimulating Pavlovian reaction to justify its policymaking, and allow discussion and a depth of thought before action.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL KEENAN,
35 Beaconsfield Road,
Claygate, Surrey.
p.keenan@which.net
September 16.

No 10's role in appointing bishops

From the Reverend Prebendary Patrick Dearnley

Sir, For many months the clergy and congregations of parishes throughout the Diocese of Liverpool (and members of other churches too) have been praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the appointment of our new bishop (leading article and letters, September 16). In addition a very full process of consultation has been conducted involving representatives of many organisations, secular as well as church, in the city of Liverpool and throughout Merseyside.

It would be instructive to learn how much prayer has been offered over this matter within the sacred portals of 10 Downing Street. The decision to reject both nominations of the Crown Appointments Commission will undoubtedly stimulate calls for the abolition of the present procedure for appointing diocesan bishops.

In the early Eighties as the Anglican Area Dean of Islington I was frequently aware of the distant, if not disdainful, attitudes of many (not all) Labour Party supporters towards the Church. In recent years one has been encouraged by the change in climate exemplified by the stances of "new" Labour emanating from certain quarters of that London borough. It is ironic that we may now well hear the lament: "Come back, loony Left! all is forgiven."

Yours sincerely,
PATRICK DEARNEY,
St John's Vicarage,
16 Adelaide Terrace,
Waterloo, Liverpool.
September 17.

From the Secretary to the Crown Appointments Commission

Sir, Your leading article today was a timely reminder of the constitutional

role of the Prime Minister in the selection of bishops of the Church of England. However, the implication that those in the Church concerned with these matters are at odds with this is wide of the mark. The Crown Appointments Commission fully accepts that the Prime Minister may choose one or other of the names submitted or may ask for further names. We welcome his proper interest in this, as we did that of his predecessors.

As you correctly state, the diocese concerned has four representatives on the commission. My experience has been that the four react favourably, finding it a robust and caring process which compares well with equivalent processes in other major organisations.

As to the outcome, anyone who knows those appointed in the last few years would find it hard to equate them with the notion of bland committee men, as has been suggested in some quarters. For example, the Right Reverend Bill Inld is to be enthroned next Saturday as the next Bishop of Truro and anyone less bland it would be hard to imagine. My Cornish friends are delighted to welcome him.

Yours faithfully,
TONY SADLER,
Secretary to the Crown Appointments Commission,
S/O 01, Fielden House,
Little College Street, SW1.
September 16.

From the Reverend Peter Haughton

Sir, The Prime Minister has every right to appoint and disappoint bishops.

Yours faithfully,
PETER HAUGHTON,
The Vicarage,
Robin Hood Lane, SW15.
p.haughton@ums.ac.uk
September 16.

Never say dye

From Lord Lawson

Sir, You report my former colleague Alan Clark as saying (interview, "History man who refuses to bow to the passage of time", September 13) "Nigel Lawson dyed his hair very early".

I do not know whether anyone nowadays takes the entertaining Mr Clark of Matrix Churchill fame seriously; but in case they do let me make it clear that, while I have nothing against hair dye, or even for that matter Mr Clark, I have never in fact dyed my hair in my life.

Yours etc,
LAWSON,
House of Lords.
September 13.

Blood and guts at Academy show

From Mr Arnold van Praag

Sir, Simon Jenkins in "The art of sensationalism" (September 13) and your other reports on the Royal Academy's chamber of horrors exhibition rise to the bait, as required.

No, this show does not anticipate criticism, as you report (September 11); it courts it. That is what it is for.

Surely it is a little late for those jaded Dadaists to continue to *épater les bourgeois* and for the bourgeois conveniently to oblige.

Of course it would be more interesting if the RA put on a show that was rather more up to date. In the meantime, one was always taught that the right way to deal with naughty children was to ignore them.

Yours faithfully,
ARNOLD VAN PRAAG,
Dove Cottage,
Weston Colville, Cambridge.
September 13.

From Mr Nicky Hamlyn

Sir, In ridiculing the forthcoming *Sensation* exhibition Simon Jenkins misrepresents a number of artworks, both past and present.

The "pile of dirty baby's nappies" that the ICA exhibited in the late 1970s was not a pile. The nappies were exhibited in cases, along with other material—notes, diagrams, etc.—in order to document the process of weaning a child from milk to solids. The work, *Post Partum Document* by Mary Kelly, examined this process from a psychoanalytic perspective and the nappies traced the visual changes in faeces.

Jenkins also scorns Tracey Emin for "filling her tent with the names of her sexual partners". Yet this work, a tent filled with people's names, is actually called *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995*, which is not the same thing.

Modern art—"atonal" music, "piles" of bricks—is a nice soft target for columnists to get their teeth into. But it is a pity they feel the need to vent their spleen in this way because modern art does need serious accessible criticism that will help bewildered gallery-goers.

Yours sincerely,
NICKY HAMLYN,
21 Friars Walk, Lewes, East Sussex.
September 14.

From Mrs Victoria Solt Dennis

Sir, It's time the art establishment stopped citing Goya's *Disasters of War* (as you quote a royal academian as doing in your report today) as a justification for exhibiting fantasies of blood and violence as art.

Goya took pains to make quite clear that the *Disasters* were works not of imagination but of reportage; two of the most horrific scenes in the series are unequivocally captioned "I saw this" and "This too". They offer no support for the invention of gratuitous violence, as any royal academian should know perfectly well.

If artists who produce horrific fantasies for exhibition believe they can be justified on their own merits, let them do so; but they can claim no support from Goya.

Yours sincerely,
VICTORIA SOLT DENNIS,
12 Prospect Row,
Brompton, Gillingham, Kent.
September 11.

From Mr Alan Brison

Sir, First *Sensation* at the Royal Academy, now the National Gallery makes its contribution.

From this week, borrowed from Germany, they will be showing an oversized canvas, a self-indulgent exercise in violence and gore, the work of yet another young artist. His other predilections include the depiction of dogs copulating and defecating, children pissing and shapeless female forms where one's attention is pointed to the indentations left by tight garments.

The picture I refer to is Rembrandt's *Blinding of Samson*, dated 1636.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN BRISON,
11 Hall Park,
Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire.
September 14.

From Mrs Christine Whitaker

Sir, Every so often the emperor steps out without his clothes: it has always been a wonderful joke on humankind. At the Royal Academy the whole court are on display in their various couture underwears.

Academicians should not worry: it's all about money, not Monet. The antics of a few people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world, and we will always have Rodin et al.

Sincerely,

C. WHITAKER,
Flat 3,
44 Great Pulteney Street, Bath.
September 12.

From Mr S. J. Trahair

Sir, It seems to me that the problem is not that the Royal Academy of Art cannot tell the difference between art and garbage (report and Diary, September 17), but that it doesn't think there is a difference.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN TRAHAIR,
Petherbridge, The Crescent,
Crapstone, Yelverton, De-on.
September 17.

NEWS

New deal for rape victims

Rape victims may be allowed to give evidence from behind screens and protected from prurient cross-examination as part of a drive to bring more sex attackers to justice.

Police, MPs and women's groups are all pressing the Home Secretary to act after the release of figures yesterday showing a dramatic rise in the number of rapes and sexual assaults reported to the police coupled with a fall in the number of trials and convictions. Page 1

Princess's car may have hit another

The Mercedes in which Diana, Princess of Wales, made her final journey may have hit another car before crashing into a concrete pillar. Fragments of the plastic brake light from a Fiat Uno have been found close to pieces of the Mercedes's headlamp and wing mirror. Pages 1, 5

Stalker sentenced

A former Army engineer wined a stalking campaign against his former girlfriend, using military skills to bug her telephone and stake out her home. Page 1

US landmine row

America refused to sign a treaty banning landmines. President Clinton said that he could not sign a document that failed to accept the responsibilities of the only superpower. Pages 1, 16

A step towards PR

The Liberal Democrats claimed that they had reached agreement with Labour to press ahead with the first steps towards proportional representation. Page 2

Midge, 65, owns up

There was no doubt about the culprit when someone broke down the church door and cut the bell ropes. Midge Mather, 65, telephoned every member of the parochial church council to tell them what she had done. Page 3

Referendum battle

John Prescott and William Hague tried to invigorate the Welsh devolution campaign amid signs that apathy could be the main factor. Page 4

Millennium design

Fifty arbiters of style and form are to decide which are the most brilliant new British innovations to be trumpeted around the world to mark the millennium. Page 6

Everton Supporters 1, Everton FC 0

When supporters of Everton football club discovered that the shirts they were wearing were not exact replicas of the ones the players were sporting, they cried foul. It transpired that it was the players who were wearing the wrong shirts. The outcry began when it appeared that the stripes on the replicas were not the same way up as those on the players' shirts. Page 1

Women at the top

The fight to become the next Irish president turned into a women-only battle after Albert Reynolds, the former Prime Minister, was rejected by his party in favour of a Belfast academic. Page 9

Water marketing

Bottled water is an expensive marketing trick and sometimes contains bacteria that make it less healthy than tap water, it was claimed. Page 10

Brazzaville fighting

Helicopters strafed the already shattered streets of Brazzaville with rockets and cannon fire as fighting between troops and militias escalated in a push for control of the city. Page 15

Versace fortune

The fashion world was stunned by the revelation that Gianni Versace, the designer shot dead in Miami Beach, had left the bulk of his fortune to his 11-year-old niece Allegra. Page 17

Minister on pot

Dominique Voynet, the outspoken French Environment Minister, has called for legalisation of cannabis and admitted smoking marijuana. Page 18

Israeli dilemma

The Israeli Government was involved in increasingly desperate talks to defuse the confrontation over Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem. Page 19



Sightseers yesterday examining the place in a Paris underpass where Diana, Princess of Wales, was fatally injured. Page 1

BUSINESS

Economy: The City is braced for further interest rate rises after new data showed unemployment at a seventeen year low and the high street spending boom continuing unabated. Page 27

Kingfisher: Surging sales at B&Q, Kingfisher's DIY chain, helped to lift the retail group's interim earnings by a forecast-beating 36 per cent. Page 27

Gas: BG, the demerged pipeline and exploration division of British Gas, confirmed it is to give £1.5 billion to investors. Page 27

Markets: The FTSE 100 rose 36.7 points to close at 5013.1. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 99.1 to 99.5 after rises from \$1.5939 to \$1.6024 and from DM2.8183 to DM2.8327. Page 30

SPORT

Motor racing: Damon Hill has been dropped by the Arrows team for next season, when his place will be taken by Mika Salo, of Finland. Hill may join Jordan. Page 52

Football: England, who are seventh, are now five places above their World Cup rivals, Italy, in the latest Fifa world rankings. Page 52

Rugby union: Clive Woodward, the new England coach, will have as his assistant John Mitchell, the New Zealand back-row forward who has enjoyed success with Sale. Page 49

Crickets: Glamorgan go to Taunton aiming for maximum points from their final county championship match. Anything less will open the way for Kent to take the title by beating Surrey. Page 50

ARTS

Mastery Moor: Sam Mendes's offers a thrilling new production of *Othello* at the National Theatre, with Simon Russell Beale outstanding as Iago. Page 38

Leigh's girls: Mike Leigh continues his exploration of the North London psyche in *Career Girls*. The best Hollywood movie is *My Best Friend's Wedding*, with Julia Roberts in comic mode. Page 39

Strauss and I: In the final extract from his autobiography, the late Sir Georg Solti recalls a memorable lunch with the composer Richard Strauss. Page 40

Men in tux: You don't have to be female to dress up in a tux and perform *Swan Lake*, as the New York-based Ballets Trockadero prove in London. Page 41

FEATURES

Dr Thomas Shuttford: Alzheimer's costs Britain £11.5 billion a year, accounting for 75 per cent of all cases of dementia. Page 20

Political shadows: Once the wife was a pearl-bedecked typist and becoming awfully good at fêtes. Now times have caught up with politicians' partners. Page 21

FOCUS

Fast mover: Since the Soviet empire, Kazakhstan has embarked on privatisation. Pages 35-37

BOOKS

Reviews: Russell Celyn Jones on Martin Amis's *Night Train*; Peter Ackroyd on Jane Austen books; and Kenneth Baker on the recent past. Pages 42, 43

TRAVEL

Best buys: New York return for £178, half-price business class to Sydney. Page 44

Ski bonus: The windfall factor is sending Britons skiing. Page 45

THE PAPERS

The Americans believe in their constitution, the Germans in the mark, the British in the Union Jack. Our confidence goes first of all to the nation. It will be said that it is an abstraction; that one cannot clothe oneself with dreams. These are objections that have no meaning for our compatriots. — *Le Figaro*

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

POP
David Sinclair finds that you can take Björk out of Iceland, but you can't take Iceland out of Björk's music

EDUCATION
An end to the government honeymoon with the teaching profession?

RADIO & TV

Review: Joe Joseph with an alternative voiceover for *The Antiques Show* (BBC1) Preview: Gerry Conlon, one of the Guildford Four, talks about his experiences in *Films of Fire: How Far Home?* (Channel 4, 9.00pm). Pages 50, 51

OPINION

Bright Wednesday

It is fitting that the best economic figures seen in Britain for more than two decades should have been published on the fifth anniversary of Black Wednesday. Since then Britain has seen strong economic growth and a steady reduction in unemployment. This is a history lesson which the Labour Government must not forget. Page 23

Hit and miss

Airlines have done much to assure passengers that their planes are safe; much more must be done if that assurance is to extend to the skies as well. Page 23

Art Sensation

The purpose of any new art movement — in so far as it can be said to have a purpose — is to unsettle and challenge. New British artists forge their links with tradition even as they strive to break them. Page 23

COLUMNS

WILLIAM REES-MOGG

No one questions that Shirley Porter has been the object of prejudice. She is Jewish, and subliminal anti-Semitism is part of British culture. Page 22

IAIN DUNCAN SMITH

Labour seems to be pulling in different directions over welfare reform, from greater compulsion in pension contributions to ending or keeping means-testing. Page 22

LORD CALLAGHAN

Economic and social conditions must be created in which private investment will flow as willingly to the sub-Saharan as it does to other developing countries. Page 22

OBITUARIES

Aldo Rossi, architect: Leon Edel, Henry James biographer; Lady Bradman, Sir Don's wife. Page 25

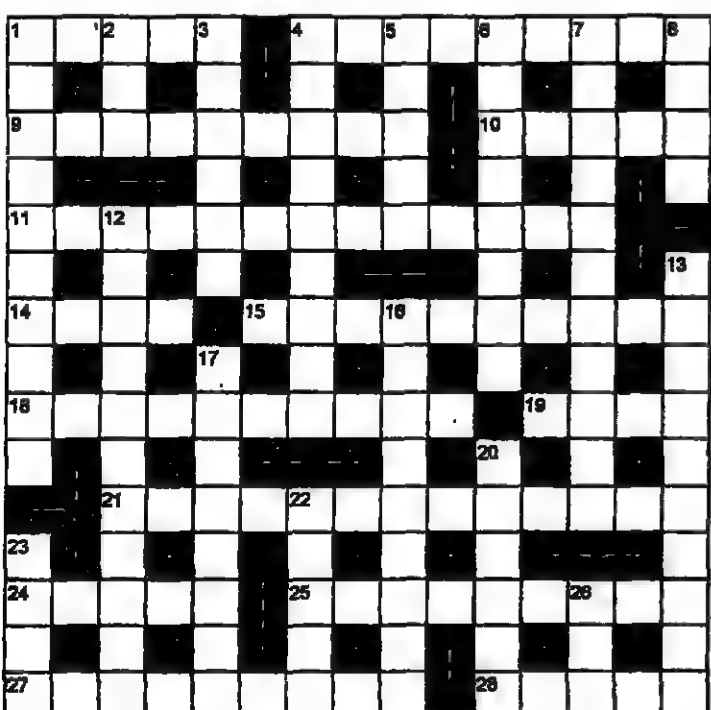
LETTERS

Welsh devolution: RA: appointing bishops: Russian visas: neo-Nazi sentence: Irish clocks. Page 23

LOTTERY NUMBERS

7, 20, 21, 22, 40, 44. Bonus: 4

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,588



- ACROSS**
- 1 Substitute taking part in practice sessions, perhaps (5).
 - 4 Receives first part of television broadcast yielding little information (9).
 - 9 Soldier eating a coarse biscuit (9).
 - 10 Give way to delay (5).
 - 11 It gives one a hot tip for joining golf club after one leaves army service (9,4).
 - 14 Ancient island with a resort (4).
 - 15 Pushed for university in more ancient setting in Slough (10).
 - 18 Version of holy book revised in Leo's papacy (10).
 - 19 Charges resulting when sides of bacon go missing (4).
 - 21 Neutral states (3-10).
 - 24 Rise in region reported (5).
 - 25 Claim by Windsor mistress at beginning of book (5-4).
- DOWN**
- 27 Extremely holy man's work at start of religious system (9).
 - 28 Characteristic spirit of Englishman when made to look small (5).
 - 1 In a pub one understands point of dealing with organisation (10).
 - 2 Raised police dog (3).
 - 3 Swarmed around, gathering litter (6).
 - 4 Tinker goes round like mischievous child, greedily (9).
 - 5 Stick to cold fish (5).
 - 6 Fabulous place where the Spanish artist gets into parties (8).
 - 7 In the cooler, hear fellow soldier (11).
 - 8 Nobleman associated with court in London (4).
 - 12 Member of military force cracking up in alien region (11).
 - 13 Repugnance of overdrawn head receiving reminders of debt (10).
 - 16 It's unpleasant when ugly hints are spread abroad (9).
 - 17 Pot or container on top of broken basin (8).
 - 20 Block the path of some dim pedestrian (6).
 - 22 Started to smoke, being soaked (3,2).
 - 23 Wordless sort of singer brooded about note (4).
 - 26 A silence in the wood (3).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,587

MEDOC HEADCOUNT
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M O T O R M A Y M A D N E S S
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I L R V N R
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E A G E
P E R G I N E F A L C O N
L G S N N S O B
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T H E O R I S E D G R I N D

Times Two Crossword, page 52

RA INFORMATION

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HOURS OF DARKNESS
Sun rises: 5.40 am Sun sets: 7.08 pm
Moon sets: 8.40 am Moon rises: 8.12 pm
Last quarter September 23
London 7.05 pm to 6.42 am
Bristol 7.18 pm to 6.51 am
Edinburgh 7.28 pm to 6.52 am
Manchester 7.18 pm to 6.49 am
Penzance 7.29 pm to 6.04 am

FORECAST

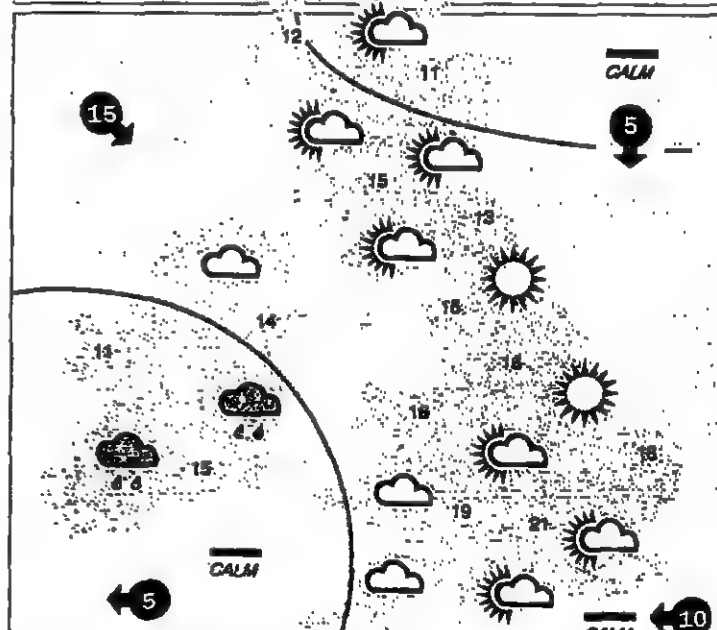
General: Scotland will have a chilly day with some rain and a few showers. Northern Ireland should have some sunny spells, but with a risk of showers later. The South and East of England will be mainly dry with fog patches clearing to leave some hazy sunshine. Wales and western England should have a lot of dry weather, but thickening cloud may bring showers later. [London, SE England, E Midlands, E England, Channel Isles, Central N England: cloudy at times, but dry with occasional sunny breaks. A light and variable wind Max 22C (72F).] [W Midlands, N Wales, NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man: some early sunshine, but clouding over bringing a risk of showers later. A light northeast wind. Max 19C (66F).] [SW England, S Wales: mostly fine with sunny periods, but thickening cloud may bring some light rain this afternoon. A light east to southeast wind. Max 21C (70F).] [NE England: mainly fine with sunny spells, but a chance of a shower. A light to moderate north wind. Max 19C (66F).] [Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, SW Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Argyll: cool, dry and sunny after a cold start. Light north wind. Max 16C (61F).] [Aberdeen, Moray Firth, N Scotland, Orkney, Shetland: cool with a few showers mixed with sunny spells. A moderate northwest wind. Max 13C (55F).] [N Ireland: fine with sunny spells, but cloud will gather in the south this afternoon bringing a risk of showers. A moderate north to northeast wind. Max 16C (61F).] [Republic of Ireland: cloudy with rain at times. Wind easterly moderate, locally fresh. Cooler. Max 17C (63F).] [Outlook: mainly dry and settled.]

AROUND BRITAIN
24 hrs to 5 pm: b=brilliant; c=cloud; d=dizzle; dc=drizzle; cl=cloud; f=fog; g=gale; h=hail; r=rain; sh=showers; s=sunny; ss=sunny; t=turmoil; w=wind; x=unknown; y=yellow; z=zebra

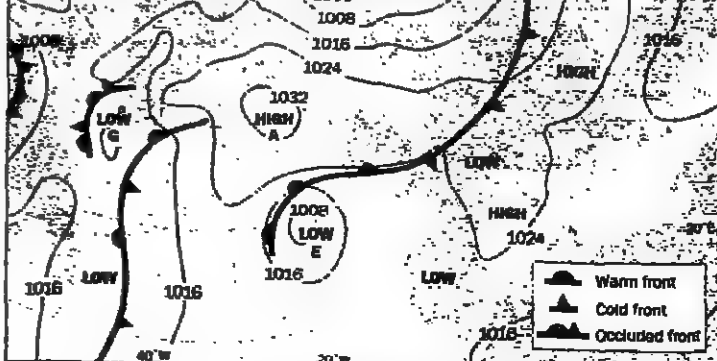
Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	8.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Belfast	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Birmingham	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Bristol	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Cardiff	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Central	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Edinburgh	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Glasgow	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
London	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Manchester	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Met Office	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Newcastle	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Nottingham	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Sheffield	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Southampton	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Stirling	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Swansea	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Torquay	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68
Weymouth	9.8	16	61	10.4	20	68

ABROAD
Algeria 25.77°C, Cairo 25.77°C, Madrid 25.77°C, Moscow 25.77°C, New York 25.77°C, Paris 25.77°C, Rome 25.77°C, Tokyo 25.77°C, Washington 25.77°C, Zurich 25.77°C

NOON TODAY



Changes to chart below from noon: high A will drift southeast, to the North Sea. Low E will fill in situ; low G will become indistinct as it moves northeast.



HIGH TIDES
TODAY AM HT PM HT
London Bridge 02.30 7.7 15.45 7.7
Aberdeen 02.42 4.8 15.18 4.8
Ayr 02.50 4.8 15.24 4.8
Belfast 02.58 4.8 15.30 4.8
Bristol 03.06 4.8 15.36 4.8
Cardiff 03.14 4.8 15.42 4.8
Dover 03.22 4.8 15.48 4.8
Edinburgh 03.30 4.8 15.54 4.8
Falmouth 03.38 4.8 16.00 4.8
Glasgow 03.46 4.8 16.06 4.8
Greenwich 03.54 4.8 16.12 4.8
Hull 04.02 4.8 16.18 4.8
Lough 04.10 4.8 16.24 4.8
London 04.18 4.8 16.30 4.8
Lough 04.26 4.8 16.36 4.8
Newcastle 04.34 4.8 16.42 4.8
Penzance 04.42 4.8 16.48 4.8
Plymouth 04.50 4.8 16.54 4.8
Portsmouth 04.58 4.8 17.00 4.8
Rangoon 05.06 4.8 17.06 4.8
Shanghai 05.14 4.8 17.12 4.8
Singapore 05.22 4.8 17.18 4.8
Tientsin 05.30 4.8 17.24 4.8
Yokohama 05.38 4.8 17.30 4.8

HIGHEST & LOWEST
Yesterday: Highest day temp: Jersey, Channel Islands 24C (75F); lowest day temp: Lough, Shetland 11C (52F). Highest rainfall: Jersey, Channel Islands 14mm; lowest rainfall: Lough, Shetland 0mm.

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Insurance Services

Britannic makes £150m mis-sold pension provision

By MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

BRITANNIC ASSURANCE yesterday disclosed that it had set aside £150 million to compensate investors who were mis-sold personal pensions.

It has also seconded 174 full-time staff to work on an investigation into the 13,500 priority cases it has identified.

Brian Shaw, chief executive, said that he was awaiting approval from the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) for a scheme to reinstate victims into occupational schemes and ensure they had not missed out on benefits. He added:

"Putting together compensation which mirrors the benefits they would have received had they joined an employer's scheme will take longer."

Harold Cottam, chairman of Britannic, said that he hoped to clear the first set of cases in time for the deadline laid down by the PIA at the end of this year.

The group's shares rose 93p to 939p after it announced a generous new dividend policy and a 211 per cent boost to operating profit. The 11 per cent rise made Britannic the

best performing share among FTSE 250 stocks yesterday and means the group is now capitalised at £1.8 billion.

Mr Cottam said he was keen to merge with a rival to fill the vacuum left as traditional home services providers such as Prudential chased more upmarket customers.

He said: "It would need to be a merger that adds value rather than just deliver market dominance." Analysts said the most suitable merger candidate would be United Assurance.

The increased dividend and the profits boost result from the injection of £1 billion of surplus assets released from its life fund in February.

The surplus, known as inherited estate or orphan assets, will fund a 20 per cent annual dividend growth over the next few years, the company forecasts. The surplus built up because previous shareholders had not always taken out the returns they were due.

Britannic, which yesterday unveiled results for the half-year to June 30, doubled its interim dividend to 10p a share and forecast the full-year payout would be 20 per cent higher at 33.6p per share.

Operating profit before tax was up 211 per cent to £80 million (£25.8 million).

Operating earnings per share were up 230 per cent to 30.38p (9.2p). Total shareholders' funds are £1.2 billion (December 1996: £132 million).

Tempos, page 30



Model Marina Midali in a spring/summer 1998 outfit

Frank Usher gives warning on first-half profits

By JENNIFER DAVEY

FRANK USHER has announced a rise in pre-tax profits from £2.02 million to £2.15 million in the year to May 31. Sales rose slightly from £21.6 million to £21.9 million.

The clothes designer gave warning that it is unlikely to be able to maintain the same level of first-half profits in the current year. It predicts that it will be hard to maintain margins and volume in the short term.

The spring/summer 1998 collections have just started showing, however, and early indications are encouraging.

The company said it was pleased with its results. Sales showed rises in the UK and significant growth in newer export markets in France, Spain, and Italy, despite decreased sales in Germany because of general economic conditions.

Re-orders and high product demand meant that at the year end group warehousing capacity was doubled and turnaround increased.

Exports, which accounted for 53 per cent of sales in 1996, were down to 50 per cent this year, which is attributed to the strong pound.

Earnings per share rose from 18.1p to 19.7p, because of the higher profit and a higher than normal tax charge in the previous year.

There is a final dividend of 7p, making an unchanged total for the year of 11.0p. The shares fell from 166p to 161½p.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

France and Germany mount Liffe challenge

FRANCE and Germany have joined forces to create Europe's largest derivatives exchange. SBF-Bourse de Paris, the French stock market body, announced plans to buy the Matif futures and options exchange. It has signed a letter of intent to link with Deutsche Boerse, the German stock exchange body, which owns the DTB electronic futures exchange. The move points to further consolidation among European derivatives exchanges in the run-up to the launch of the single European currency. It poses a fresh challenge to the London International Financial Futures Exchange. Liffe said the Franco-German move was a response to its own competitive strength. A spokesman said: "This is not really a surprise. The advent of EMU will mean fewer exchanges. This is a challenge, but it is also a response, in a way, to our successes."

Meanwhile, CEENET, set up by the Corporation of London in 1994 to promote London as a financial centre, is today expected to agree a merger with British Invisibles, the promotional body. Henrietta Royle, chief executive of CEENET, said it would lead to a "more co-ordinated" approach to selling London abroad. City Diary, page 31

Electricity complaints

LONDON ELECTRICITY is being scrutinised by its regulator, Oftec, after a 55 per cent rise in customer complaints to Oftec. The regional electricity company has recruited 50 more staff to deal with calls, and Oftec is working with it. A spokeswoman said: "We are working out the most appropriate way to handle their complaints. Part of the problem has been customers not feeling satisfied with the way their complaints have been dealt with." Complaints rose to 561 in the year to March 31, from 360. Northern Electric complaints rose 27 per cent to 460. In all, complaints about electricity companies fell 10 per cent.

Gas switch for 500,000

A QUARTER of gas customers who can shop around for their supply have left British Gas, the regulator said yesterday. The number of switches has climbed to 500,000, with customers changing supplier at a rate of 5,000 a week. Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, said the figure was an important milestone. She said: "As we expected, there was a surge of interest when competition was extended to Avon, Dorset, Kent and Sussex in February and March this year." Competition, which started in the South West, will move to Scotland and the North East on November 1.

EU fears over ferry deal

THE European Commission still has serious doubts about a planned joint venture between P&O and Stena Line, the ferry companies, EU sources said on Wednesday. They said the EU executive was not expected to rule on the case before the end of November. One source said: "A final decision is not expected before the end of November at the earliest." The Commission will soon send a so-called statement of objections to the companies, detailing its problems with the proposed deal, the sources said. P&O and Stena would have six weeks to reply to the Commission's objections.

Pound hits Bowthorpe

SHARES in Bowthorpe, the electronic components manufacturer, rose 17½p to 360½p yesterday, in spite of the company reporting falls in both profits and sales. The rise in share price was seen as a sign of confidence in the restructuring plan designed by Nick Brookes, the company's recently appointed chief executive. Bowthorpe blamed the strength of sterling for the 5 per cent fall in half-year pre-tax profits, from £42.5 million to £40.2 million, and the 4 per cent fall in sales, from £270 million to £260 million. An interim dividend of 3.43p, up from 3.21p, is to be paid on December 8.

One-stop Woolwich

THE Woolwich has pitched into the lucrative field of conveyancing by opening its first estate agency one-stop shop. The bank is offering homebuyers the services of estate agent, mortgage lender and solicitor. Other estate agents have already piloted the scheme. These include Hambro Countrywide, which hopes to benefit from the extra fees such services will generate. Woolwich's first shop is based in High Wycombe and will open later this year. Woolwich is taking advantage of the boom in the property market and the planned rationalisation of Lloyds TSB's Black Horse estate agencies.

Trinity profits up 34% at half time

By RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR

TRINITY INTERNATIONAL, publisher of the Liverpool Post and the Belfast Telegraph newspapers, provided further evidence of the renaissance in the regional press sector yesterday with a 34 per cent rise in pre-tax profits, to £32 million, in the half year to June.

Phillip Graf, chief executive, attributed the improvement to strong advertising growth, lower newspaper costs and continuing savings from group restructurings.

On future prospects, he said: "I remain positive about the opportunities with-

in the regional media."

Turnover fell 3 per cent, from £165.3 million to £159 million, because of the sale of Trinity's Canadian division. Operating profit rose 28 per cent to £36.9 million.

Earnings per share increased 41.2 per cent to 16.1p. The interim dividend rises 11 per cent to 4p.

Trinity said it was continuing to benefit from advertising revenues strengthened by consumer confidence. Newsprint prices were stable, it added. Circulation initiatives were also expected to help progress.

New Asda phonecard to undercut BT by up to 75%

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

ASDA, the supermarkets group, is to launch a pre-paid phonecard that will compete directly with British Telecom's own cards and charge up to 75 per cent less for calls.

Allan Leighton, chief executive of Asda said his aim was to eliminate exaggerated profits in the UK's rapidly expanding phonecard market. He added: "Anyone who's been shocked by their phone bill knows how over-priced the UK phone market is."

A three-minute local evening call will cost 21p with the Asda card, compared with 27p with a BT phonecard and 60p with a BT chargecard. A five-minute weekend call to the US will cost £1 with the Asda card, £3.60 with the BT phonecard, and £4 with its chargecard.



Leighton: market overpriced

The market is already worth an annual £110 million, with a number of phonecard brands offering similar discounts to those provided by Asda.

The new card, which comes in £1, £3, £5 and £10 versions,

will go on trial at Asda's store in Pudsey, West Yorkshire, from early next month and is expected to be on sale nationwide by the end of the year. It may be used with any touch-tone phone to make calls within the UK and to more than 230 countries.

The card differs from the BT version, which the customer inserts into a slot in the phone. Instead, each Asda card comes with PIN number that is keyed in before dialling.

BT said: "The customer simply puts our card into the phone, whereas with the Asda version he or she has to type extra digits before the call begins. Not everyone wants to do that."

"But we recognise that it is a competitive market and this phonecard will represent good value for some customers."

American acquisition for CRH

By ADAM JONES

CRH, the Irish building materials group, has continued its US expansion with the purchase of CPM Development Corporation, based in Washington, for \$94 million (£59.1 million) in cash.

CPM's activities include production of asphalt aggregates and concrete for tasks such as roadbuilding and residential development.

The company made a pre-tax profit of \$14.6 million last year on sales of \$131 million. Existing management will be retained and \$6 million of the purchase price will be conditional on performance. CRH is paying book value for the company.

CRH's US materials division will now have sales of about \$1 billion.

NewRo Bill will kill off old Acts

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

NEWRO, the unitary City regulator due to be introduced next year, is to be empowered by a single reform Bill that will sweep away the vast array of financial services legislation that has accumulated over the years, Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, announced yesterday.

The Treasury has decided against amending existing financial services legislation. Instead, laws such as the Financial Services Act, the Banking Act, the Building Societies Act and the Policyholders Protection Act will, where possible, be repealed and replaced with a single Act. A draft Bill will be published for consultation next summer.

Mrs Liddell refused to detail the Bill's contents, but said: "We have... begun work in earnest on the framework of controls and accountabilitys that will deliver our aim of a regulator that is clearly accountable to the public and the Government."

As a company limited by guarantee, NewRo would have the same legal status and form as the Securities and Investments Board (SIB), the current lead regulator of financial services, she said. However, unlike SIB, NewRo may be given statutory objectives similar to those for utility regulators.

Mrs Liddell strongly suggested that the Treasury would include outsiders to the industry on the regulator's board to see that it functioned as a public guardian.

Fund's \$17bn rescue shows few signs of reviving confidence in battered economy

IMF dismay over slow pace of Thai reforms

By JANET BUSH AND ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE International Monetary Fund admitted yesterday it is disappointed that its \$17 billion (£10.5 billion) Thai rescue package has not restored more confidence in the battered economy.

Michael Mussa, IMF director of research, said: "Things have gone a little less well than we had hoped."

Rumours that the IMF might withhold future payments to Thailand because of the slow pace of reform in the country again spooked markets though South-East Asia. The Thai baht fell to 37.22 against the dollar, compared with 36.55 on Tuesday. The Malaysian ringgit slipped from 2.9900 to 3.015, while the Philippine peso hit a record low of 33.25 to the dollar. The Singaporean dollar and the Indonesian rupiah also suffered, although falls were less

marked. The continuing currency problems weighed heavily on stock markets in the region, with all the main exchanges registering declines.

The political uncertainty surrounding the Thai rescue package seems certain to prompt further currency sell-offs over the coming week. Thailand has two vital parliamentary votes next week, including a no-confidence motion against the Government that could threaten the austerity budget passing through parliament.

The first official IMF review of Thailand's compliance with the conditions is scheduled for September 30. Asean finance ministers meet in Bangkok today, although economists believe there is little likelihood of them solving their current problems through currency co-operation.



Asian children feeding off scraps

India key to Asian boom

SOUTH ASIA, led by India, has the potential to be the world's fastest-growing exporter over the next 25 years but must undertake far-reaching economic reforms to take full advantage, according to a report by the World Bank (Janet Bush writes).

The Bank said that sustained progress in reducing poverty in South Asia depended critically on faster growth, "which has been shown to be strongly and positively influenced by integration with the world economy".

The Bank issued an urgent call for further liberalisation of trade barriers, still the highest in the world. Further progress in bringing down tariffs coupled with privatisation, efforts to contain budget deficits and greater discipline in government, would boost exports substantially.

The report added that India's exports could grow by almost 12 per cent a year in the next decade, potentially the highest rate in the world.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.34	2.16
Austria Sch	20.96	19.30
Belgium Fr	61.73	56.77
Canada \$	2.350	2.162
Cyprus Cyp£	0.882	0.810
Denmark Kr	11.38	10.48
Finland Mk	9.05	8.30
France Fr	10.0	9.22
Germany Dm	2.99	2.57
Greece Dr	474	435
Hong Kong \$	13.25	12.05
Iceland	128	108
Ireland Pt	1.12	1.03
Israel Sh	5.92	5.37
Italy Lira	2941	2704
Japan Yen	207.83	190.10
Malta	0.683	0.604
Netherlands Gld	3.384	3.089
New Zealand \$	2.67	2.43
Norway Kr	12.13	11.19
Portugal Esc	300.33	278.50
S Africa Rd	8.22	7.26
Spain Ptas	250.79	232.00
Sweden Kr	13.01	11.91
Switzerland Fr	2.48	2.26
Turkey Lira	283121	262343
USA \$	1.709	1.586

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

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COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

This month, the members of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee practised admirable self-restraint. They sat on their hands and allowed interest rates to remain untouched. But yesterday they must have felt a tickle of itchy fingers as a series of buoyant statistics were unveiled.

The figures painted a picture of a country where unemployment is falling, earnings are rising and consumers are confident enough to be out shopping. The question is whether this is a healthy and sustainable state of affairs or whether it is the sign of an economy about to rush out of control.

The fear is that the MPC will interpret the statistics as the latter and may already be preparing to let their digits spring back into action and push up interest rates next month. The minutes of their August meeting, released yesterday, give weight to such a view, betraying an air of unanimous hawkishness around the table. But the MPC should be restrained a little longer. Unlike City analysts, who must produce instant reaction to the statistics, the MPC has weeks to ponder the facts behind the figures and closer investigation should convince the members that their continued inaction is desirable.

The retailers are already delving deep into their vocabularies to explain why the loud ringing of their tills should not be

interpreted as a boom. If there is a hint of talking their own book in this, their shareholders would expect nothing less. Kingfisher's Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy was faced with the task yesterday of explaining why his soaring sales were not symptomatic of a consumer boom. Not the easiest of tasks. But not every store is enjoying the same level of success, and the Kingfisher figures are the product of a combination of clever retailing and being in the right markets, for both its Comet and B&Q subsidiaries have undoubtedly been reaping the benefits of the windfalls that have recently swollen consumers' spending power.

The full effect of the demutualisation bonuses cannot yet be determined but, despite yesterday's news from Dublin of yet another building society turning into a bank, the happy days for carpetbaggers are drawing to a close. We may have to wait until Christmas to see just what proportion of the gains is to be spent and what will be squirreled away in sensible saving, but the windfall effect does need to be stripped from the retail sales figures before a true pattern of dangerous extravagance could be diagnosed.

Over at Next the company is already experiencing something of a slowdown to its phenomenal growth. The explanations ranged from the weather, whose impact on the Government's monthly figures should never be underestimated, to the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. If the shops are shut, as they were on that Saturday, then the tills do not ring. That factor alone should provide the MPC with hours of debate.

A heavy brew of rumours

City rumours feed on themselves until they assume gargantuan proportions. The latest one to be showing signs of over-indulgence is the story that Bass is about to join forces with Rank.

The thinking behind this is that the ambitious Sir Ian Prosser, prohibited from carry-

ing out his Carlsberg coup by the mean Margaret Beckett, is now anxious to see corporate action elsewhere. And Rank, so the gossip goes, may be amenable to an approach as its share price languishes and the analysts pour scorn on its chief executive.

Those who like a little substance with their rumours can even point out that the two companies have already begun to cooperate. Bass's Marriott hotels having a nascent relationship with Rank's Tom Cobbleigh pub business.

But while there may be bits of Rank that would appeal to Sir Ian, there are elements that most certainly would not. Wet blankets they may be, but those close to the company suggest that Sir Ian is not about to pay over the odds in order to provide Andrew Teare with a comfortable exit route from Rank. Bass has already demonstrated that it can grow its own format pubs, with the very successful All Bar One

chain. There is no reason why the company should do what Rank did and pay hugely over the odds to acquire another pub business, Tom Cobbleigh.

If Hard Rock could be extricated from the Rank stable, then Sir Ian would surely be interested, but so would a host of international operators. There is every reason why purchasers might want it, but no reason why Rank should sell. So for Bass, the choice must be to take all of Rank or none — the likelihood is that the answer will be none.

There are, after all, other businesses that must be attracting Sir Ian's attention at the moment. The William Hill betting shop business is an obvious one. The business is up for sale and has attracted several bids, both from abroad and from home grown venture capitalists with plenty of cash. For Bass, with its Coral chain of bookies, William Hill would be an obvious fit. But for one thing: the

spectre of Margaret Beckett, the interventionist President of the Board of Trade.

After his abortive Carlsberg venture, Sir Ian would not want another counter-productive tangle with her. But if a deal could first be cooked up with Ladbroke to split the William Hill portfolio, Bass might avoid a monopolies problem and back a winner.

Changing rules for measuring jobs

When in Opposition, Labour derided the unemployment statistics. The more optimistic the figures, the louder the criticism of their authenticity. But things look different from the perspective of Government. Now Labour ministers seem to be losing their enthusiasm for ditching the current measuring system.

Perhaps financial considerations are influencing them. The set of figures that Labour had previously put its faith in, and which are published quarterly, would bring an annual bill of around £8 million if they were produced monthly. There are suggestions that ministers may be tempted to stick with the

current basis of measurement, with just a few cosmetic changes.

But the need for change is clear. While the fall of almost 50,000 in yesterday's jobless total was welcome, the inability of the Office for National Statistics to suggest what the monthly trend in unemployment now is caused some concern among those who snatch at statistics as fodder for their computer models.

Ordinary folk might think that diving a trend from monthly figures should not be difficult but statisticians are a different breed. The ONS chaps may be trying to push the Government into taking a decision over how unemployment is to be measured. Will it put its money where its mouth certainly was, and clean up the jobless figures once and for all by sanctioning a new monthly measure? Or will spending pressures prevail against principle?

Ruled out

GREAT news. The Government has lined up a new regulation task force. This one, says Dr David Clark, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, is to help produce better regulation rather than less regulation. This may indicate a sense of reality, but plenty of red tape still needs to be cut. The team assembled under the leadership of Northern Foods' Chris Huskins should regularly remind itself that in regulation, less is good.

Savoy checks out cities overseas

By DOMINIC WALSH

THE Savoy Group, which has just completed a £72 million refurbishment project, is pressing ahead with plans to buy up to ten hotels in leading international cities over the next five years.

Ramón Pajares, managing director, said yesterday that he was preparing a strategy document on international expansion that he would present to the board soon. He added: "The brand name has a value which gives us a tremendous opportunity to acquire hotels in the right cities abroad."

He pointed out that expanding the Savoy name would decrease the current ratio of overhead costs, enable the company to develop a proper central reservations system, and allow it to compete with the top international hotel groups. He cited Paris and Barcelona as possible targets.

The news came as Mr Pajares unveiled an 84 per cent jump in pre-tax profits in the first half to £7.7 million as the benefits of the refurbish-

ment began to kick in. The two-year project was completed last week as the finishing touches were put to the £40 million restoration of Claridge's, one of the group's four luxury London hotels. Turnover was 4 per cent better at £45.2 million.

Mr Pajares said that one of the key factors had been a rise in operating margins from 11.5 per cent to 18 per cent, largely because of stringent management controls and the addition of new bedrooms and other services during the refurbishment.

Average occupancy in London rose from 59.8 to 65.6 per cent. However, after taking into account the rooms out of commission for refurbishment, occupancy per available room rose from 81.7 to 85.2 per cent.

Earnings came in at 19.2p (11.3p) per A share, but, as in past years, there is no interim dividend.

Reforms pay off, page 31

Eastern promise attracts Wassall

By PAUL DURMAN

WASSALL, the manufacturing group that made a £277 million profit from this year's sale of General Cable, its US copper wire business, is looking to spend part of its £300 million cash pile in South East Asia.

The company believes the collapse in the region's stock markets has thrown up interesting acquisition opportunities, particularly in Thailand.

It is looking for a Chinese to become chief executive of Wassall Asia Pacific, its 70 per cent-owned subsidiary, which is separately quoted in Singapore. Chris Miller, chief executive, said Wassall was looking to spend perhaps £20 million in the Far East, but would have no qualms about making a bigger investment if it can find a good deal.

Mr Miller said the company is not close to a deal at the moment. "It's got to be so much

more important to do the right deal than a quick deal."

With borrowing facilities, he said Wassall could easily afford to spend £500 million. The group is keen to buy solid manufacturing businesses that have lost their way.

The revival of General Cable since its purchase in 1994 was one factor behind the improvement in Wassall's underlying pre-tax profits, which rose 21 per cent to £29.7 million in the first half. With the £199 million profit from selling the first 30 per cent of General Cable in May, total pre-tax profit in the six months to June 30 was £231.5 million (£22.4 million).

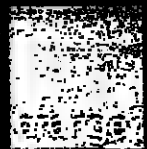
Wassall will pay an interim dividend of 2.3p a share, up 10 per cent, as a foreign income dividend on November 14.

Tempus, page 30

Sonia Silverstein had fought tooth and nail for everything she'd ever got. So the deal with Orange took her by surprise. All her company's 50 phones on one bill. National daytime calls at only 12p/minute plus VAT, calls between Orange phones at just 6p/minute plus VAT, and BT calls to Orange for less than they'd be to Cellnet or Vodafone. All achieved by calling Orange and without even raising her voice. Sonia Silverstein was on top of the world. And with Orange roaming available in Europe and beyond, she intended to stay there.

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CHANGING TIMES



New chapter begins in publisher's life

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich used to be America's largest publisher of textbooks. The company, built on a roster of distinguished authors including Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot, made so much money that it was able to diversify into theme parks. Sea World and Cypress Gardens became the fun parts of the portfolio.

The party came to an abrupt end in 1987, when Robert Maxwell, then at the height of his arrogance and power, made a hostile \$2.2 billion (£1.4 billion) bid for Harcourt. The attack ultimately failed, but it was a pyrrhic victory for Harcourt. Other than nearly destroying the company, it ended any chance that Peter Jovanovich, the son of William Jovanovich, the chief executive who had run the group since 1954, would build on his father's work.

The younger Jovanovich, now 48, has just surfaced as chairman and chief executive of Addison Wesley Longman, the educational arm of Pearson, the *Financial Times* to Madame Tussaud's

group. The trim, preppy-looking, American remembers the Maxwell defence as a frantic, yet wasted, era in which Harcourt was more concerned with paying off its crippling debt than publishing books.

Harcourt failed Maxwell's advance by paying a cash dividend of \$40. It financed the "bribe" by issuing \$1.8 billion of junk bonds, the debt instruments that compensate investors for their dubious credit ratings with high interest payments. The payments, of course, eliminated Harcourt's profits and the share price went through the floor. William Jovanovich was forced to sell the theme parks. Exhausted, he stepped down in 1990 and Peter was called into action.

The situation was desperate. "We were either going to sell the company or go bankrupt," Peter said. "I quickly learnt to negotiate

with angry junk bond holders." Two years later, he sold the company his father built to General Cinema for \$1.4 billion. He was a free man, but not for long.

McGraw-Hill, the market leader in the US textbook market, snapped him up and made him president of Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Scholastic Publishing, a joint venture between the two companies. The irony was delicious. Macmillan Inc was the publishing house that Maxwell pursued, and won, after the failed Harcourt bid. "I couldn't get away from the man," Peter said.

Patrick Quinn, the senior editor of Educational Marketing, a US newsletter that covers the textbook industry, said the younger Jovanovich distinguished himself at Macmillan/McGraw-Hill with the launch of several classroom hits. One of them, the *Adventures in Time and Space* social studies



Jovanovich: work cut out

series, took 60 per cent of the Texas market. Mr Quinn said: "I would say that Peter was instrumental in leading McGraw-Hill to several great successes."

In 1995, Jovanovich became president of McGraw-Hill's edu-

cational and professional publishing group, one of the top jobs in the industry worldwide. He will not say why he left the company, but it is an industry axiom that your chances of rising to the top at McGraw-Hill increase dramatically if you are a member of the founding McGraw family. Peter was not.

In the spring, David Veit, Pearson's senior director in the US, introduced him to Marjorie Scardino, Pearson's new chief executive. They took an instant liking to each other and in late July she offered him the job as the head of Addison Wesley Longman.

Addison is enormous. Its sales last year were about \$950 million, accounting for more than a third of Pearson's annual sales. It is the leading player in English language training in America and internationally, but lags well behind in the school age and the

college markets, where McGraw-Hill and Simon & Schuster reign supreme. In short, Jovanovich has his work cut out for him.

He admits that margins are not up to industry standards and, in the college market particularly, Addison has relied too heavily on titles that have reached their sell-by dates. The division also suffers because the American and British sides of the business were never properly integrated. "There has been no transatlantic viewpoint," Jovanovich said.

He has been at the job for less than two months and will not reveal Addison's growth strategy, other than to say that it will involve years of hard slog. New writers, editors, designers and salespeople will be recruited and new markets are to be exploited, notably in Asia. More large acquisitions, such as last year's \$369 million purchase of HarperCollins Educational, are

unlikely until the operating units on both sides of the Atlantic have been melded together.

The City has high hopes for Peter Jovanovich in particular and Pearson's educational division in general. Pearson has been accused of being unfocused and analysts are putting pressure on it to sell businesses, such as the Lazard investment bank, that have no obvious links with the rest of the group. But Addison has emerged as a core holding with strong potential for growth. The market is working in Addison's favour, especially in the US, where more children than ever are entering the school system and school budgets are expanding.

William Jovanovich, who is 77 and lives in San Diego, is delighted that his son is making a name for himself in the textbook business, albeit one that does not carry the family name. Peter said: "I always talk to my dad about book publishing. He's in the pantheon of great educational publishers and he's a good sounding board."

ERIC REGULY

It is not only America that should count the cost of new federalism



AMERICAN AGENDA
BRONWEN MADDOX

Americans have been almost as quick as Downing Street to take credit for the flush of emotion in Britain after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. At last, commentators have argued, Britain is curing itself of the stiff upper lip, recognising the healthiness of American-style openness.

That psychological triumphalism has emerged seamlessly from the economic boomfulness in which the Clinton Administration has indulged itself this summer: the view, voted most loudly during the French elections and the Denver G8 summit, that the US has perfected the formula for prosperity.

Now there is Scottish devolution. It, too, has been greeted by US politicians as a step, albeit long overdue and clumsily designed, towards an American or Germanic federal system. One of the parts of the US Constitution about which Americans feel most passionate is the Tenth Amendment, which directs that any powers not explicitly given to the federal government are "reserved to the states... or the people".

Some also see the Scottish votes as embodying the spirit of the "new federalism", the shift of power and money from Washington to state governments which has been a Republican rallying cry for nearly two decades, and is currently the strongest flavour in US politics.

These days, the most powerful politicians in the US are not the battered old Washington warhorses familiar to British TV screens, but the state governors. In their state capitols, they are often more able to execute their ideas than the President or congressional leaders.

The trouble is that the new federalism is not working nearly as well as is claimed. Its fail-



Some see Scotland as embodying the spirit of the new federalism, as money and power shift from Washington

ures contain warnings for Britain, not to mention Canada, Mexico, India and the other nations that have caught the bug. States are exercising their new strength by scuppering many national initiatives, from trade policy to deregulation of crucial industries, jeopardising the overall competitiveness of America. It is also easy to overlook the fact that the roots of the

industry is a reminder of the current impotence of Washington in the face of state governments. The immediate hurdle for the White House, of course, is to strike a deal with the Republican-controlled Congress, whose leaders have made clear that they would prefer to shelve the subject until next year. But the greater obstacle is that state govern-

ment and business in the country. For American families, the local electricity bill is often their most expensive utility by far, with bills running into hundreds of dollars a month. This year's Economic Report of the President was provoked to address the subject bluntly under the heading "Reasons for the delay in deregulating electricity and telephone". It put part of

to raise standards. In the face of this fragmentation, some are resolutely optimistic. Competition between states should eventually push utility deregulation through, argues Joseph Stiglitz, the World Bank's chief economist, who was previously chairman of the US Council of Economic Advisers. States do not want to lose businesses to their neighbours because their costs are too high. But the problem is that the same competition threatens to reduce some standards, such as environmental rules, to the lowest common denominator, undermining popular policies that benefit the whole country.

A second worry is whether the governors are able to pay their way as they believe. At the moment they are riding high, courtesy of Washington. For years, the federal government has paid them grants for welfare and social services. These transfers have had an important effect in smoothing out levels of benefits and social serv-

ices between states, and damping down migration across state borders. They have also allowed the states quietly to run budget surpluses each year while the federal government runs a much-publicised deficit.

That may change. Much of the current surplus is something of a windfall, an echo from the recession. The grants were originally based on the number of people on welfare, but with radical reforms, and the economic boom, the numbers are plummeting. Under the new rules, states will have more responsibility for paying for their own social services.

The result, some fear, will be much more migration within the US, as people and businesses uproot to avoid rising local taxes in the poorer states. Massachusetts, historically a high-tax state, took years to recover from emigration to New Hampshire, Vermont, New York and Connecticut. As the inner cities have found, it can be hard to halt the downward financial spiral caused by the flight of the affluent.

No one pretends to predict the economic and social consequences of the new federalism with precision, although the Urban Institute, a Washington think-tank, has just embarked on a three-year, \$30 million (£18 million) study in a welcome attempt to move the argument beyond anecdote. But the problems already appearing behind the fashionable rhetoric for states' rights contain lessons that apply to any country.

Above all, it is clear that devolution of power from the centre, like many experiments, looks most appealing in times of prosperity. There is no need to conclude, as pessimists do, that too much democracy can damage your health.

But unpicking layers of regional subsidies, the financial glue of a nation, has unpredictable results which may not help the country as a whole. Nor may they be entirely welcome, when they finally become clear, to the inhabitants of the poorer regions, even though they may have been among the most passionate campaigners for local autonomy.

Old guard at The Savoy have reason to be grateful

Unpopular reforms are paying off, say
Jon Ashworth and Dominic Walsh

Ramón Pajares was loudly booed when he took the Savoy stage barely three years ago, but his critics are starting to eat their words. His unpopular reforms aimed at dragging a fading collection of hotels into the modern age have seen their worth reflected in yet another robust set of financial results.

Claridge's, newly revitalised with a £40 million facelift, is turning away bookings. The Berkeley, which had £11 million spent on it, is enjoying spectacular success with Vong, its fashionable eatery, where sales have soared 400 per cent in two years. The Savoy, feeling the benefits of an £18 million overhaul, has just been voted Hotel of the Year by readers of *Executive Travel* magazine.

Repeal business across the group has risen from 49 to 60 per cent. Huge resources are being devoted to training — £425,000 this year alone — and a flag-waving tour of 34 cities cost a further £1.8 million.

The Savoy old guard don't like this sort of thing, of course, arguing that only a foreigner (Mr Pajares hails from Catalonia) would be brazen enough to meddle with such icons of Britishness. Foreign or not, Mr Pajares is an hotelier, first and foremost, with 20 years with Four Seasons under his belt, and he has risen above the caustics. As he said recently: "I am giving back these buildings the pride they deserve so they can be here for another hundred years."

Most of the work has been devoted to Claridge's, a favourite of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, which has been largely untouched since the 1930s. The present building was finished in 1898 to a design by C.W. Stephens, the architect responsible for Harrods. It took its name in 1854 when William and Marianne Cla-

ridge bought an existing hotel on the site. Leading interior designers including Tessa Kennedy and John Stefanides were let loose on Claridge's 197 rooms and suites, blending Art Deco and Victorian influences with direct dial telephones, and other modern executive tools.

The idea was to introduce a fresh look and lure in the prey — the young, deep-pocketed, business executive. Two former private apartments on the top floor have been turned into penthouse suites with commanding views across central London. Former office space has been converted into executive double rooms, and guests have the run of a new health and fitness centre.

Captains of industry are regular occupants of the penthouse suites, which cost up to £2,300 a night, excluding VAT, but including the services of a personal butler. Double rooms typically cost £325 a night.

Competitors include the 90-room Lansborough, created from the shell of the St George's Hospital at Hyde Park Corner at a cost of £85 million. Another arch-rival is the 210-room Dorchester, owned by the Brunel Investment Agency, who lavished £95 million on refurbishments. Not everyone has the luxury of a blank cheque. As François Touzin, general manager of Claridge's, says: "We are not the Sultan of Brunei. We had to ask shareholders for the money."

Meanwhile, the financial transformation of The Savoy Group looks set to continue. Analysis expects pre-tax profits of about £23 million this year, with perhaps £30 million in 1998. The previous high was £14.3 million in 1987 under Giles Shepard, now at the Ritz. On top of his annual bonuses, Mr Pajares is in line for a one-off payment of £150,000 when profits hit a figure near £20 million. He has earned it.

Wilmslow boy

COULD Jim Sutcliffe, slung out of the Prudential last Friday after he fell out with Sir Peter Davis, resurface at United Assurance? Institutional investors, who feel United Assurance has been losing its way of late, would like to see Mr Sutcliffe in charge. He is still a respected figure in the life assurance industry and leaves the Prudential at the end of the month.

Alas, two doubts remain. The job of shaking up United Assurance, created by the



"Well, so much for your minimalist phase"

merger almost a year ago of United Friendly and Refuge, would require relocation to Wilmslow, Cheshire. A fine town. I am sure, but some way from the fleshpots of the capital. Secondly, will United Assurance be willing to match his salary? Sutcliffe made £437,000 including bonus last year, and he is on an 18-month contract so he could theoretically walk out with more than half a million. But his pay-off will depend on how quickly he can find another job, which gives little incentive to rush. All this suggests some tricky discussions may be taking place even now in the Sutcliffe household.

THE planned merger of derivatives trading in France, Germany and Switzerland, creating a rival to the City, was formally announced in London at the Glaziers Hall, south of London Bridge. This is the only livery hall located outside the area ruled by the Corporation of London. So ensuring, City wits were saying, that no elite snatches squads of aldermen, their hats decked terrifically with



ostrich plumes and driving highly trained suicide flocks of sheep before them, could surround the building and cart the offenders off to the Tower of London.

Giving up

IN THE days before political correctness there used to be pressure on everyone working for the cigarette companies to puff away like beagles. Old City hands will recall briefings at BAT Industries when the air was virtually opaque, the board chain-smoked to a man and handfuls of coffin nails were given out at the entrance.

All is different now, even if no one at the companies can quite bring themselves to admit that their products are bad for you. So Gallaher, the big company spun out of American Brands, has stubbed out an age-old tradition. Pensioners of the company used to be entitled to receive 200 free gaspers a month. This cost £4 million a year, even if it did tend to save on pension costs as the years drew on. Now the hand-outs have been scrapped.

UNHELPFUL, unsympathetic and unprofessional was the verdict on tax officials and their approach to the general public who pay their wages. It could not have come at a worse time for those millions who now have less than a fortnight to get their self-assessment forms in or be forced to do the sums themselves. So let it here be placed on record that I rang the self-assessment helpline a couple of days ago, while struggling with my own form. And they could not have been more helpful, sympathetic and professional.

Write-off

IS THIS the first sign of a tougher regime as Marjorie Scardino shakes up Pearson?

An internal memo tells staff at Pearson Professional, which includes financial magazines such as *Investors Chronicle*, that Peter Warwick will not be chief executive there after October 10. It is all about focusing on fewer businesses, and the division has recently been slimmed by a disposal. Other opportunities to exploit his talents are being sought, and Pearson is keen to keep him after 14 years of service. But no guarantees. This from a company that has a reputation of being one of those benign concerns from which no one is ever sacked.

MARTIN WALLER



Scardino: signs of a tough new approach at Pearson?

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Claremont Garments trims dividend forecast

By GEORGE SIVELL

SHARES in Claremont Garments, the clothing manufacturer, fell 12p to 94.5p yesterday after the group revealed a cut in the forecast dividend for the year to 5p compared with 9.87p in the previous year.

The Marks & Spencer supplier reported a fall in pre-tax profits from £2.7 million to £965,000 in the six months to June 30. Operating profits fell from £3.6 million to £2.4 million on sales up from £84.4 million to £86.4 million.

Earnings fell from 3.5p to 1.3p per share. However, an uncovered 2p interim dividend will be paid, down from 4.62p last time. Peter Wiegand, chairman, said: "While we expect a much-improved operating performance in the second half against 1996, it is unlikely that in the second half of the year we will achieve the level of operating profit made in the comparable period of 1995."

Mr Wiegand says that the inability to replace staff quickly after its recent restructuring will lose the group £9 million in the full year. He said that after the plant closure in Glasgow and consolidation at other sites the group did not replace the UK labour force at the same rate as demand picked up. He says the loss of sales had cost a "few million" pounds in profit.

The group is, however, already getting more off-shore capacity on stream. Its Tunisian lingerie operation is preparing to start production later in the year. Coupled with a completion of staff training in Britain, Mr Wiegand said the group will be on a better footing at the end of the year.

Marks & Spencer business currently accounts for about 95 per cent of turnover at the group, which is M&S's fifth-largest supplier. This turnover split is set to rise as the group sells its only non-M&S supplier, Belshire, which makes clothing for Next.



Peter Wilson, Gallaher chairman, left, with Philip Burchell, finance director, after reporting sales up 6.6 per cent yesterday

Tobacco adverts ban in 2000, says Gallaher chief

By CHRIS AYRES

THE BAN on tobacco advertising could take another three years to come into effect because of a shortage of parliamentary time, one of Britain's leading cigarette manufacturers said yesterday.

Gallaher, whose Silk Cut and Benson and Hedges brands are smoked by an estimated six million Britons, made the prediction as it reported a 6.6 per cent rise in half-year sales to £2.1 million. The company said its share of the UK market increased from 39 per cent to 39.5 per cent.

Peter Wilson, chairman and chief executive, said: "The

matter of the advertising ban has not gone to Parliament yet and given the availability of parliamentary time and the need to draft legislation it could be a while before any change comes about. It's hard to speculate exactly how long it will take, but my opinion is that it will be in 2000 rather than 1997."

The Government is expected shortly to produce a White Paper on the proposed ban, which has provoked protests from cigarette manufacturers and sports bodies that rely heavily on advertising revenue from tobacco companies.

Mr Wilson declined to comment on the size of his company's current advertising budget, although it is estimated that British tobacco companies spend a total of £50 million annually on promoting their products. An advertising ban, if it ever came, would not significantly damage Gallaher's business, he said. "We think our brands have already been well established and awareness is very high."

The company, which was demerged from American Brands in May, reported a 7 per cent rise in pre-tax profits

yesterday, from £156 million to £167 million. Earnings per share were 17.9p, and a dividend of 9.625p will be paid on November 3.

The company said that increased duty on cigarettes in the United Kingdom had stifled the cigarette market and had encouraged the smuggling of tobacco products.

Gallaher estimates that more than 70 per cent of the UK's hand-rolling tobacco market is taken up by goods smuggled from the Continent, where a 50-gram bag of its Old Hoborn brand is 60c cheaper than in Britain.

John Laing builds on property market recovery

By ADAM JONES

JOHN LAING, the house-building and construction company, has increased interim profits 43 per cent, aided by buoyancy in the property market and modest improvement in the beleaguered UK construction sector.

Pre-tax profits for the first half of 1997 rose to £12.4 million on turnover up from £574 million to £634 million.

The profit margin in the construction division, which provides most of the turnover, was 0.3 per cent. The company is aiming for 2 per cent by 2000.

Two Private Finance Initiative (PFI) construction projects for which Laing is the preferred bidder, the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and the Joint Service Command and Staff College, are likely to receive final authorisation in the second half, the company said.

The company has spent £7 million bidding for PFI contracts, £4 million of which will be recovered when the two projects are finalised. It is preferred bidder on a third, the National Physical Laboratory.

The average sale price of a Laing home rose from £39,000 to £40,000, a result of the growing inclusion of more luxurious properties. Sir Martin Laing, chairman, said that price increases were concentrated on southern England. Prices were flat in Scotland.

Laing sold 680 UK homes in the half and expects to sell 1,600 to 1,700 in the full year, in addition to 750 in the US. The company said that it owns enough land for two-and-a-half years of UK development.

An interim dividend of 3.5p (5p) is to be paid partly as a foreign income dividend.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Somerfield buoyed by sales progress

SOMERFIELD said that sales in the first 16 weeks of the current year were slightly ahead of the same period a year earlier. Shareholders at yesterday's annual meeting were told by Andrew Thomas, chairman, that the group is encouraged by progress in the current financial year. In particular, operating margins continue to show improvement, primarily through higher gross margins as a result of buying savings and better mix. Mr Thomas said: "Against a background of continued food price deflation, overall sales for the first 16 weeks are slightly ahead of the corresponding period last year." In the Somerfield fascia stores, like-for-like sales volume growth was ahead of that achieved throughout 1996-97. Mr Thomas added. Shares of Somerfield rose 1.5p yesterday to 197.5p.

Mr Thomas added: "We continue to focus our primary efforts on improving the offer to our customers and, since the year end, have accelerated the reshaping of our portfolio with two new stores opened, five under construction, 14 new conversions and contracts exchanged for the disposal of a further 26."

Crucible succession

JAMES SPOONER, the non-executive chairman of Morgan Crucible, the engineering and specialty materials group, has resigned at the age of 65 after 14 years in the post. A spokeswoman for the company said that Mr Spooner was retiring. He will leave the board on December 31, to be succeeded by Bruce Farmer, who is currently managing director. Ian Norris has been appointed deputy managing director, with a view to succeeding Dr Farmer on January 1. Pre-tax profit in the last full year was £100.2 million (£85 million). The shares closed up 6p at 485.5p.

HoF opens £12m store

HOUSE OF FRASER has opened its new department store in the Victoria shopping centre in Nottingham. The new store represents an investment of more than £12 million and forms the key feature of a new extension to the shopping centre. With 81,000 square feet of selling space and some 350 members of staff, the Nottingham store brings the total number of stores owned by House of Fraser to 51 and is the first to have been designed reflecting House of Fraser's re-focused marketing programme.

Hemingway buys sites

HEMINGWAY PROPERTIES has agreed to buy a portfolio of 43 properties from Scottish Life for £44.1 million, to be met by borrowing and from existing cash resources. The portfolio currently produces rental income of £4.1 million, giving a net initial yield of about 9 per cent. The portfolio consists of retail, office and industrial premises in England and Scotland, where Hemingway said that it sees potential for transactions to enhance capital value and rental streams. Hemingway said that prospects for the group during the current financial year continue to be satisfactory. Its shares rose 1p to 41p.

Select in American deal

SELECT Appointments has acquired the business and certain related assets of Aztec Consulting Services for a maximum of \$7.2 million (£4.5 million). Aztec, based in New Jersey, provides information technology personnel specialising in programming, software development, systems analysis and testing. The maximum aggregate consideration is \$7.2 million. In 1996 Aztec reported profit before tax of \$748,956 on sales of \$12.2 million. For the first six months of this year Aztec reported profit before tax of \$547,982 on sales of \$7.1 million.

Sterling puts squeeze on Bernard Matthews profit

BERNARD MATTHEWS, the poultry group, suffered a fall in pre-tax profits to £6.7 million in the six months to July 13, from £10.4 million in the same period last year, in spite of a 7.5 per cent increase in overall sales to £185.3 million (Alistair Pegg writes).

Sales of branded products in the UK rose by more than 10 per cent, while foreign operations increased turnover 14 per cent, largely because of the

contribution of Bartsch, the newly acquired German company. The interim dividend is 1.8p per share (1.7p). Earnings per share were 3.49p (5.76p).

The company blamed sterling's strength for squeezing export profit margins and enabling foreign imports to depress domestic turkey meat prices. Higher interest rates, falling commodity meat prices and high cereal prices also had an adverse effect.

Computer games market is predicted to boom

THE European computer games market is set to boom in the next five years, according to a report. Europeans will spend more than £15 billion on home computer games software in 2002, says *European Electronic Games 1997-2002*, a new report from Datamonitor, the analyst.

Online games, conducted over networks such as the Internet, will be worth £376 million in 2002, it says.

Faster and cleverer personal computers, capable of running more complicated software, and becoming much more popular in people's homes, will be the prime cause of the boom.

By 2002, the report says, 44.5 million European homes will have a multi-media computer. Dedicated games consoles will slowly be superseded by computers, and by better machines that are a hybrid of the two, it forecasts.

ACCOUNTANCY

Taxpayers, watch this space

With the deadline for tax returns looming, Andrew Meeson gives an assessment of self-assessment

Self-assessment sounds like such an uncontroversial idea, and if everything goes well it should not be a problem. Three quarters of taxpayers already have the correct tax deducted (either through pay-as-you-earn or from savings) and do not even have to worry about self-assessment. For the remaining eight million or so, the theory is simple — if the Inland Revenue has not sent a tax return, ask for one. Then complete it, work out how much tax is owed, and pay it. So long as the tax return is sent in by September 30 the Revenue will work out the bill for you.

But of course it is not as easy as that — the Revenue cannot be sure that everyone will fill in the returns properly. Some people will make mistakes and a few will try to get away with paying less than they should. Which is why the Revenue is required to make inquiries into returns. Not all returns, of course — it does not have the manpower and it would not be a sensible use of government money. Probably no more than one in 20 returns will be subjected to an inquiry.

There are three objectives behind these inquiries: to en-

sure that the system is working properly, to encourage people to get things right and to catch and punish cheats. This means that some inquiries (about 3,000 a year) need to be made at random. The random inquiries were selected before the returns were sent out, so there can be no question of unfairness.

The others are picked by what the Revenue calls "risk criteria". In some cases this will mean that, simply by looking at the information contained in the return, the Revenue suspects that something is wrong — a concept which is already familiar to the self-employed since that is the basis on which their accounts have been reviewed by the Revenue. In other cases, it may simply be that your return contains the type of transaction where there is a likelihood of mistakes being made — for example capital gains tax valuations.

If your return is selected, you will be told so in a formal letter, together with a copy of the Revenue's code of practice for inquiries. The Revenue can start an inquiry at any time up to January 31, 1999 (later if you send your return in late). If it does not start an inquiry



Andrew Meeson says the Revenue can make inquiries

within that time, it must leave your return alone after that (unless it discovers you left things out, or made false statements in the return).

The Revenue is committed to keeping these inquiries non-confrontational, as far as possible. Most will be settled by correspondence between the inspector of taxes and you or your adviser, although there may be times when the inspec-

tor suggests a meeting. In addition, the inspector may ask you to provide documentary evidence of any entries in your return — for example interest certificates, contract notes, etc.

Do not forget that you are required to hold on to these documents at least until January 1999 (2003 if you are self-employed), and there are fines of up to £3,000 if you do not.

What has worried many people is the possibility that an inquiry might become a costly nightmare, with the inspector asking more and more questions in an attempt to find something wrong with the return. The recent, infamous, "Farthings Steak House" case where an innocent taxpayer was excessively and expensively hounded, was bad publicity that the Revenue is determined will not happen again.

We now have a strong safeguard against Revenue "fishing expeditions" — at any time during the inquiry you can ask the independent appeal commissioners for an order to terminate the inquiry. Unless the inspector can convince the commissioners that he has good reasons for carrying on, he must stop asking questions.

Once the inquiry is over, the inspector must write to you and tell you what, if any, extra tax is due. Within the next two months either you or the Revenue can amend your tax bill, and if you are not happy, the commissioners will adjudicate on the final figure.

That is how it is supposed to work in theory. How this new and untried system will work in practice is a question to which taxpayers, their advisers and, indeed, the Revenue are eagerly awaiting the answer. In a year's time we will know. In the meantime, as they say, "watch this space".

The author is a senior tax manager at Price Waterhouse.

A fudge that could lead to an alliance

THE inevitable has happened. The International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC) has stumbled in the final furlong as it hurries towards its deadline of next spring for a fully agreed core set of international financial reporting rules. And, as expected, it is the question of accounting for financial instruments that has brought it down. Now, instead of presenting its own very different accounting standard on the topic, it is to simply take on board the existing US rules.

That is exactly what everyone feared would happen when the IASC embarked on its task of finalising a core set of accounting standards that would open up the possibility of an American stock market listing to international companies complying with the IASC rules. Given the interminable time that accounting standards have taken to finalise in the past, the timetable the IASC adopted always looked optimistic in the extreme.

The International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), which has the final word on whether or not the IASC work is good enough for it to endorse international standards as being adequate for cross-border offerings and listings, may now find its task easier. After all, much of the opposition has come from the Americans and they can hardly argue if the IASC rules start to be lifted simply from the Americans' own rulebook, even if they cover only the measurement of derivatives and accounting for hedging.

But it may not be as simple as that. The decision has yet to be taken. The IASC board meets in Paris at the end of October and the proposals come in two stages. The first is that the American standard be adopted "as an interim measure". The second is that the IASC should "join with national standard setters, including the American Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), to work to agree a harmonised international standard". Sir Bryan Carsberg, IASC's chief, said: "We are taking an interim step in a special situation. It is the only way we can meet the April deadline."

This to some extent gets everyone off the hook. It had been expected that the American Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which provides the toughest hurdle for companies outside the US to gain a listing, would eventually use the lack of completion of the financial instruments standard as an

easy way to insist that the IASC's efforts had failed. Now it will not be able to argue that.

The efforts to produce rules that will govern the use of financial instruments have been fraught on both sides of the Atlantic. Those people promulgating rules are in reasonable agreement. It is everyone else who disagrees. In America, there are any number of prospective rules in the process of completion. In the UK, the programme, though vigorous, has some way to go.

This week sees the publication of the latest edition of the monumental and standard work on financial reporting, *UK GAAP*, produced by a team from Ernst & Young. It says: "It is clear that the subject of accounting for financial instruments is likely to remain one of the most difficult regulatory challenges for the next few years. Perhaps unusually, there seems to be a high degree of consensus among the major standard setters — that marking all financial instruments to market can be the only ultimate solution — but this is a controversial view that may meet with considerable resistance."

As an illustration of this it would be hard to better the outrage with which Martin Scicluna, chairman of Deloitte & Touche, greeted the news of the IASC decision. "Is it wise of the IASC to disregard both the opposition in the US and the interests of companies worldwide which do not find the US proposals appropriate to their circumstances?" he said. "Could this be due to excessive pressure from the SEC? Could it be that the SEC is finding more and more resistance in the US to the FASB proposals and is now trying the global route?"

And he also alleged that most companies liked financial instruments because they resembled icebergs. "The risks that companies assume in taking on derivatives remain mainly off-balance sheet, under the water," he said.

But the IASC's difficulties could be turned to advantage, which is clearly how Sir Bryan would like to see the situation. Once IOSCO approves the international rules next year there could be an alliance between IASC, FASB and the other standard-setting bodies to renegotiate and build effective rules on financial instruments. What started as a fudge to meet a timetable could turn into a proper global alliance of the bodies that set the rules of financial reporting.



ROBERT BRUCE

Measured performance

DOWN at the English ICA last week they were wondering whether directors at the Woolwich brought sleeping bags and pyjamas along to board meetings just in case they didn't get home before midnight. The thoughts were prompted by the extraordinary performance of Sir Brian Jenkins, Woolwich chairman and a past president of the institute, in chairing the institute's annual corporate report-

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ing conference. By midday, two hours into the event, it was already an hour behind schedule. And at the appointed hour for lunch, with one speaker and a panel discussion still to come, Jenkins started asking the audience if the next speaker should be shunted onto the afternoon shift. In his inimitable and disarming way he simply said "I've totally lost control". Fortunately for Jenkins one of the

afternoon speakers, Will Hutton of *The Observer*, failed to show and the event ended only half an hour late. The title of the conference, "Performance measurement in the digital age", obviously didn't apply to Jenkins's watch.

Wealth of talent

IT IS good to see that the principles of being a good entrepreneur are dimmed into them

early at Price Waterhouse. Last year the firm created a staff introduction scheme that provides a £3,000 bonus to anyone bringing in a new recruit. Needless to say it is the financial services practice that has done best. Some £30,000 has been paid to staff "for helping us to meet our growth targets in a highly cost-effective way". Thwarted recruitment consultants are believed to be fuming.

No 'hot air' jokes

THIS weekend sees the annual Open House event when London buildings open to the public. And again the star attraction is Chartered Accountants' Hall, HQ of the English ICA. We would suggest trying the famous echo in the council chamber, but it is closed for repairs to the air-conditioning. Jokes about the quality of hot air are wearing thin among staff. But the rest of the building is open from 10am to 1pm on Saturday.

ROBERT BRUCE

Equities regain the high ground

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
4.90	4.85	AB InBev	4.85	+0.05	+1.0	12.5
4.85	4.80	Carlsberg	4.80	+0.05	+1.0	12.5
4.80	4.75	Heineken	4.75	+0.05	+1.0	12.5
4.75	4.70	Kaiser	4.70	+0.05	+1.0	12.5
4.70	4.65	Miller	4.65	+0.05	+1.0	12.5
4.65	4.60	Stout	4.60	+0.05	+1.0	12.5
4.60	4.55	Watson	4.55	+0.05	+1.0	12.5

BANKS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	ABN-AMRO	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Barclays	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

BREWERIES, PUBS & REST

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

BUILDING & CONSTRUCT

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

BUILDING MATERIALS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

CHEMICALS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

DISTRIBUTORS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

ELECTRICITY

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

ELECTRONIC & ELECT

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

ENGINEERING

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

INSURANCE

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

INVESTMENT TRUSTS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

LEISURE & HOTELS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
1.25	1.20	AB InBev	1.20	+0.05	+4.2	12.5
1.20	1.15	Carlsberg	1.15	+0.05	+4.3	12.5
1.15	1.10	Deutsche	1.10	+0.05	+4.5	12.5
1.10	1.05	First Direct	1.05	+0.05	+4.8	12.5
1.05	1.00	HSBC	1.00	+0.05	+5.0	12.5
1.00	0.95	Industrious	0.95	+0.05	+5.3	12.5
0.95	0.90	Paragon	0.90	+0.05	+5.6	12.5
0.90	0.85	Prudential	0.85	+0.05	+5.9	12.5
0.85	0.80	Standard	0.80	+0.05	+6.3	12.5
0.80	0.75	Union	0.75	+0.05	+6.7	12.5

MEDIA

1540	Heineken	70 7/8	94	28	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
171	Leontine	43 1/2	102	16	117
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Variation in the City

KAZAKHSTAN

FOCUS

David Watts introduces a three-page report on a country that is moving quickly to develop its rich resources

Nation poised at the crossroads

Even by the standards of the former Eastern bloc, few countries have undergone as rapid a transformation as Kazakhstan. Once the dumping ground for ethnic minorities that Stalin found inconvenient, and later a testing ground for the Soviet Union's most unpalatable weapons systems, the country has moved so fast to privatised modernisation that signs of a hankering for the old ways are evident.

If the Kazakhs give the impression that they are trying to transform themselves too quickly, it is hardly surprising given the world demand for the country's oil, gas and numerous other mineral resources. Scarcely a single developed Western country is unrepresented among the legions of business people flying into Almaty, the capital, and few Asian countries, either. Almost 100 companies are represented at a two-day investment conference starting today in London, an indication of the interest being shown in the potential of this country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

President Nazarbayev has shown great skill in maintaining the unity of the country during the post-Communist period when anti-Russian feeling could easily have split over into clashes between Kazakhs and Russians, who have played such a large part in the country's economy. He is also one of the few leaders to negotiate successfully the transition from Communism through his standing in what is essentially a tribal society. He enjoys overwhelming support in the presidency, which is contested every five years.

Britain and America are in the forefront of the drive to develop Kazakhstan's oil resources as a complementary source of supply to the Middle East.

In world terms, the Central Asian states' reserves are still a fraction of those in the Middle East. Kazakhstan's proven reserves are eight billion barrels, according to British Petroleum, compared to Iran's 93 billion and Iraq's 112 billion. But Kazakhstan's position and its strategic potential make it attractive to Western governments. Advanced technology in oil re-

To bring in Western money the Government has been willing to create laws to deal with the new reality

covery allows Western countries to gain a quick foothold in an area starved of modern industrial technology and Western interest and capital for more than 50 years. Equally, for the West, the potential benefits of making friends on the periphery not only of the old Soviet empire but on the edge of its Chinese equivalent are obvious.

To bring in Western money and expertise, the Government of Kazakhstan has been willing to create laws to deal with the new reality — often with frightening speed and simplicity of approach. This can be risky: the Government could change its mind just as quickly.

Some see the return of the old system of centralisation through this arbitrary, extra-legal approach. New investors should take care to understand what they are dealing with before making financial commitments. This becomes even more advisable because the

Government is now taking the South-East Asian "tiger" economies as its model, with the concomitant desire to place economic progress above everything else. As a result, inflation was allowed to accelerate to four figures at one stage, with a consequent disastrous effect on living standards.

This tendency to disregard the lot of the ordinary worker is nowhere more evident than in the grandiose plans to move the capital from Almaty to Akmoła at the turn of the century. There is a certain logic in moving the state capital to an area that is now Russian-dominated as a means of better uniting the multi-farious ethnic groups. But the estimated cost is \$1 billion.

Akmoła, a farming town in mosquito-ridden fields, seems an unlikely prospect as a capital. But President Nazarbayev seems determined to go ahead — and unwilling to acknowledge that his Government is presently unable even to meet salaries and pensions in full. The problem is that the President is offering tax incentives to those willing to contribute, as indeed he is to foreign investors. This is having a detrimental effect on the budget, itself the beneficiary of a \$450 million credit line from the International Monetary Fund. The credit is dependent on the containment of project costs at \$500 million.



A traditional Kazakh hunter releases his specially trained eagle

Signs of life stir in the economy

As trade routes open up, foreign investors are coming in. Ahmed Rashid reports

Since gaining independence seven years ago, landlocked Kazakhstan has been desperately seeking exit routes for its vast oil, gas and mineral resources. But creating trade routes has been the hardest task, thanks to wars in Afghanistan and the Caucasus to the south, a difficult Russia, which wants to restrain Kazakhstan's growth, to the west, and problems with China over their common border.

And since independence, the Central Asian Republics have suffered from low growth, high inflation and a decline in industrial output compared with when they were part of the Soviet Union.

But Kazakhstan may be about to turn the corner: it is showing the first signs of economic growth since the Soviet Union broke up, and is opening up trade routes to the west and the east, while the rapid privatisation of the economy has encouraged European, American and Japanese investors.

Earlier this year, the Finance Minister, Aleksandr Pavlov, said

Kazakhstan was slowly achieving economic stability. Industrial output grew by 0.3 per cent in 1996, compared with an 8 per cent fall in 1995 and even larger drops right after independence. Mr Pavlov expects gross domestic product (GDP), which stood at 1.41 trillion tenge (\$18 billion) in 1996, would grow to 1.74 trillion tenge in 1997.

In June government leaders told a conference for foreign investors that inflation, now 17 per cent, would be reduced to 10 per cent in 1998, and that 80 per cent of the country's enterprises had been privatised. The privatisation of the main industrial assets, farmland and even shops has been helped by loans and expertise from the European Community. The new stock market has been a great success and a new leasing law is expected to be passed by the end of this year, which will encourage further foreign investment.

Kazakhstan also plans to join the World Trade Organisation and make its currency, the tenge, fully convertible by next year. There is a slow but steady industrial revival and its potential agricultural wealth, particularly in wheat production, is being boosted by foreign technology and improved water management. After settling their border problems, China has emerged as the largest trade partner. A railway line now delivers Chinese consumer items and machinery directly from Beijing to Almaty. In return, Kazakhstan exports wheat and oil products.

But Western investors have warned the Government that the stability and full implementation of contract terms and a fair and uniform application of new investment laws is needed if the country was to attract greater foreign investment. Kazakhstan has a poor reputation for observing contract terms, particularly in rebuilding its infrastructure, because of frequent cancellations of signed contracts with Western companies. There are also complaints about corruption.

Nevertheless, with high inflation and unemployment, many still face hardship. Tens of thousands of people, especially in the mining sector, went on strike during the 1996-97 winter because of unpaid wages and pensions totalling \$800 million. The Government has since paid off much of the backlog thanks to recently signed oil deals.

President Nazarbayev has said one way to cut costs would be to reduce the one million bureaucrats who rule a population of 17 million. To this end, he sacked thousands of government employees in May.

Kazakhstan's economic future depends on the exploitation of its oil and gas reserves and it is this area which has attracted foreign investors in recent months, as hopes rise that pipelines can now be built eastward and westward, ending the country's long isolation.

The new stock market has been a great success

BALANCE SHEET

	1995	96	97*
Total GDP (\$bn):	8.6	19.1	20.6
GDP % change (constant prices):	-8.6	+1.4	+2.8
Industrial output % change:	-7.9	+0.5	+1.2
Agricultural output % change:	-21.3	0.0	+1.0
Consumer prices % change (end year):	+60.3	+40.1	+29.0
Consumer prices % change (annual av):	+178.3	+51.1	+35.0
Average wages % change:	+70.5	+23.0	n/a
Broad money % change (end year):	+118.0	+70.0	n/a
Total trade balance (\$bn):	-0.2	-0.6	n/a
Exports (\$bn):	5.2	5.4	n/a
Imports (\$bn):	5.4	6.0	n/a
Foreign direct investment (\$bn):	72.3	86.0	n/a
Unemployment rate %:	2.4	3.5	n/a
Proved oil reserves (billion barrels):	At end 1996:	8.0	
Proved natural gas reserve (trn m ³):	At end 1996:	1.04	

*Projection

Source: EBRD; BP Statistical Review of World Energy 1997

KAZAKHOIL

Playing its role in nation building

Production and Refining of Hydrocarbons

KAZAKHOIL is the largest oil and gas company operating in the Republic of Kazakhstan. During the first half of 1997, enterprises of the company produced more than 10 million tons oil, 1 million tons of condensate and 2,732 BCM of gas. Subsidiaries and joint ventures of the company are engaged in developing some of the best production projects and are well known outside of Kazakhstan. They include JSC Embamunaigas, JSC Tengizmunaigas, JV Tengizchevroil (with reserves of 1 billion tons of gas condensate), among others. The company's aggregate volume of oil reserves is more than 1.5 billion tons.

Marketing and Sales of Hydrocarbons

The company pays special attention to the organization of marketing and effective sales of products. Our department for project management and our subsidiary KAZAKHOIL-COMMERCE carry out special research of energy markets both in Kazakhstan and abroad. The company is also a major trader in Central Asia. Exports of the five largest enterprises affiliated in one way or another with the company amounted to 3.5 million tons of oil for the first half of 1997. KAZAKHOIL has set itself the goal of increasing sales of refined products. The company attaches special significance to its activity on Kazakhstan's internal market.

Combining subdivisions engaged in exploration, production, refining and sales of product, KAZAKHOIL is gradually acquiring the characteristics of a vertically integrated, multi-profile oil and gas company.

The program for Restructuring and Privatizing the Oil and Gas Sector.

As a result of the large scale privatization of the oil and gas sector being carried out in Kazakhstan, our company has become partners with major international firms. The division of functions between State-owned and private enterprises within the industry has been accomplished. At present, the structure of Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector meets international requirements and provides investors with a favorable environment in which to work. On the whole, approximately \$2.3 B have been invested in projects in which the company participates. Companies from the USA, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, France, Turkey and other countries are the main source of such investments. KAZAKHOIL is participating in the elaboration of a program for prospective development of oil and gas industry.

Management of Projects

The company represent and defends the State's interests by managing the State's portfolio of shares and its equity interests in such international projects as the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, as well as various joint ventures and production sharing agreements. In accordance with a government resolution, the company is charged with organizing investment tenders and conducting negotiations on exploration and production projects in Kazakhstan, including Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian and the Aral Sea. KAZAKHOIL is also authorized to attract investments through securities operations.

The Resource Base

The Republic's established hydrocarbon reserves of category oil for 206 discovered fields amount to more than 6 billion tons of oil, 1,901 billion cubic meters of gas and 944 million tons of gas condensate.

At present, 77 fields are under development with aggregate reserves of 5.17 billion tons oil, 1,528 billion cubic meters of gas and 880 million tons of gas condensate.

The largest of these fields according to established reserves are Tengiz, Karachaganak, Kenba, Zhanazhol, Zhetybay, Kalamas, Karazhanbas, Uzen and Kunkol. Their aggregate reserves are 4,480 billion tons of oil, 1,448 billion cubic meters of gas and 881 million tons of gas condensate. Projections for an increase in established oil reserves by the year 2005 amount to 15 billion tons.

The Republic's most prospective projects will involve development of Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian offshore, where projected reserves of liquid hydrocarbons are estimated at 10 billion tons and investments in developing offshore fields should total \$150 B.

For more information about our activities, please contact us.

KAZAKHOIL

National Oil and Gas Company
Bogenbay Batyra 142, Almaty - Kazakhstan
Tel: (3272)62-60-80, 696903 Fax: (3272)69-54-05

Door opens for West

In the words of President Nazarbayev, foreign investors now have a "one-stop shop" to guide them into Kazakhstan. Since March the State Committee on Investments has been the sole government body that foreign investors have to deal with. This has streamlined procedures and reduced bureaucratic delay. A raft of legislation safeguards foreign investors' rights, reinforced further by newly adopted international accounting standards, legal codes and company reporting rules.

Generous tax holidays are on offer to foreign investors: the bigger the project, the bigger the tax break. Up to 100 per cent off the basic rate of income tax, land tax and property tax is available during the first five years of an investment project. Thereafter, reductions of up to 50 per cent off the same taxes apply for the next five years.

Foreign investors also qualify for complete or partial exemption from customs du-

David Rudnick on how bureaucratic burdens have been swept away in a bid to attract Western companies

ties normally levied on imports of equipment and raw materials. And as a further incentive, the Government is set to offer more generous tax allowances on depreciation, to speed up industrial renovation and modernisation.

Foreign investors in priority sectors of the economy already benefit from government grants, which may include the provision of free state-owned land and industrial equipment.

One of the most challenging projects under way is the development of Kazakhstan's first Special Economic Zone, Kyzyl-Orda. Located in the windswept centre of the country, the pioneering city has already attracted the Canadian oil company, Hurricane Hydrocarbons, which has pledged to invest \$280 million

(£175 million) over the next six years.

The legal undertakings which the Government has given foreign investors guarantees their right to manage their enterprises freely. Investors' profits and dividends are similarly protected by law, as is their right to convert local currency into hard currency and repatriate funds. The Government has also undertaken not to impose price controls on raw material inputs or finished products.

Potential investors requiring further information on tax and investment laws and regulations can approach the International Tax and Investment Centre, an independent non-profit organisation that brings together Western com-

panies and government officials in monthly forums.

Alistair King, of the law firm Baker & McKenzie, who is based in Almaty, believes that the practical value of the legal guarantees offered to foreign investors is not at issue. "Problems can arise at micro level," he says. "The one-stop shop approach means that relevant ministries may not be brought into the picture at the start, creating problems later."

Day-to-day disputes centre on detailed regulatory concerns rather than the overall investment framework. Mr King says: "Experience has shown that the grant of a concession to produce locally may not ensure a permit to export the product."

Mr King adds that extensive diligence is needed by a Western investor in any joint venture partnership.

"Legal ownership of assets may at first glance lie with your putative partner, but the legal documentation is often less than conclusive."

Still, the legal framework should be adequate to underpin the activities of Almaty's new stock exchange, due to open by the end of this month. The exchange will feature three tiers of trading and the Government plans to sell off 5-10 per cent of shares in several partly privatised "blue chip" enterprises including oil companies, metal plants and Kazakhtelecom.

The stock exchange's regulatory system has been prepared with the help of foreign advisers, but Mr King believes that further regulatory provision will be needed after trading begins. "Central depositories and an active trading environment are still novel concepts in Kazakhstan." So fine portfolio investment, as opposed to direct investment, may take time to take off.

Whether President Nazarbayev achieves his ambition of making Kazakhstan the first Central Asian tiger depends crucially on his success in attracting foreign investment. Foreign investors appreciate Kazakhstan's strong Government and political stability and the backing it has from the international community.

The United States has signed a security pact with Kazakhstan. And Kazakhstan's friendship with fellow Muslim countries, notably Malaysia and Indonesia, is stimulating serious investor interest there.



Odds-on favourite: a Kazakh horseman wins a kiss in this traditional event known as *Kyz Kuu*, or "catch a girl"

Land of steppes and deserts

With an area of 2.7 million square kilometres, Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, but its population is less than 17 million. Most of the country is steppe, and 40 per cent is desert, though it has forests, mountains and glaciers. The climate is dramatic. Temperatures can range from almost 50C in summer to minus 40C in winter.

The capital Almaty has a population of 1.17 million, but the President has decreed a new capital: Akmol, a former caravan halt on the Silk Route, which has a population of about 300,000.

Like most countries formerly under the Soviet umbrella, Kazakhstan suffers from some pollution. Kyzyl-Orda, in the middle of the country, is not only a Special Economic Zone, but also designated an Ecological Disaster Area by the

Peter Brown supplies the facts and figures

United Nations because of its river pollution.

In June, Kazakhstan destroyed its last nuclear bomb as part of an agreement that the Kazakhs claim brought them under an American security umbrella (a point which President Nazarbayev will raise in Washington this year). Meanwhile, years of nuclear testing have reduced life expectancy and increased cancer rates in the Semipalatinsk region.

None of this is likely to deter investors. For them, travel arrangements are improving. Flights go from Frankfurt, Vienna, Amsterdam and Istanbul to Almaty airport, which is managed by

Lufthansa, KLM and Turkish Airlines are among the carriers, and British Airways may join them soon. A chartered flight to Ural'sk via Italy leaves Stansted twice a week. The bigger cities of Karaganda, Chimkent, Semipalatinsk and Atyrau also have their own airfields. The roads are best suited to 4x4 vehicles.

Living standards are improving and hotels are springing up fast. Almaty has a Hyatt Regency and a five-star Ankara Hotel. The dollar is the currency of choice. In general the language is Kazakh in the regions and Russian in the cities, although perhaps 30 per cent of the urban population speaks English.

● Visa and other information: 0171-581-4646. LTTI exporting advice: 0171-215 8215. Details of this week's Investing in Kazakhstan conference at the Royal Garden Hotel, London: 0171-453 2703

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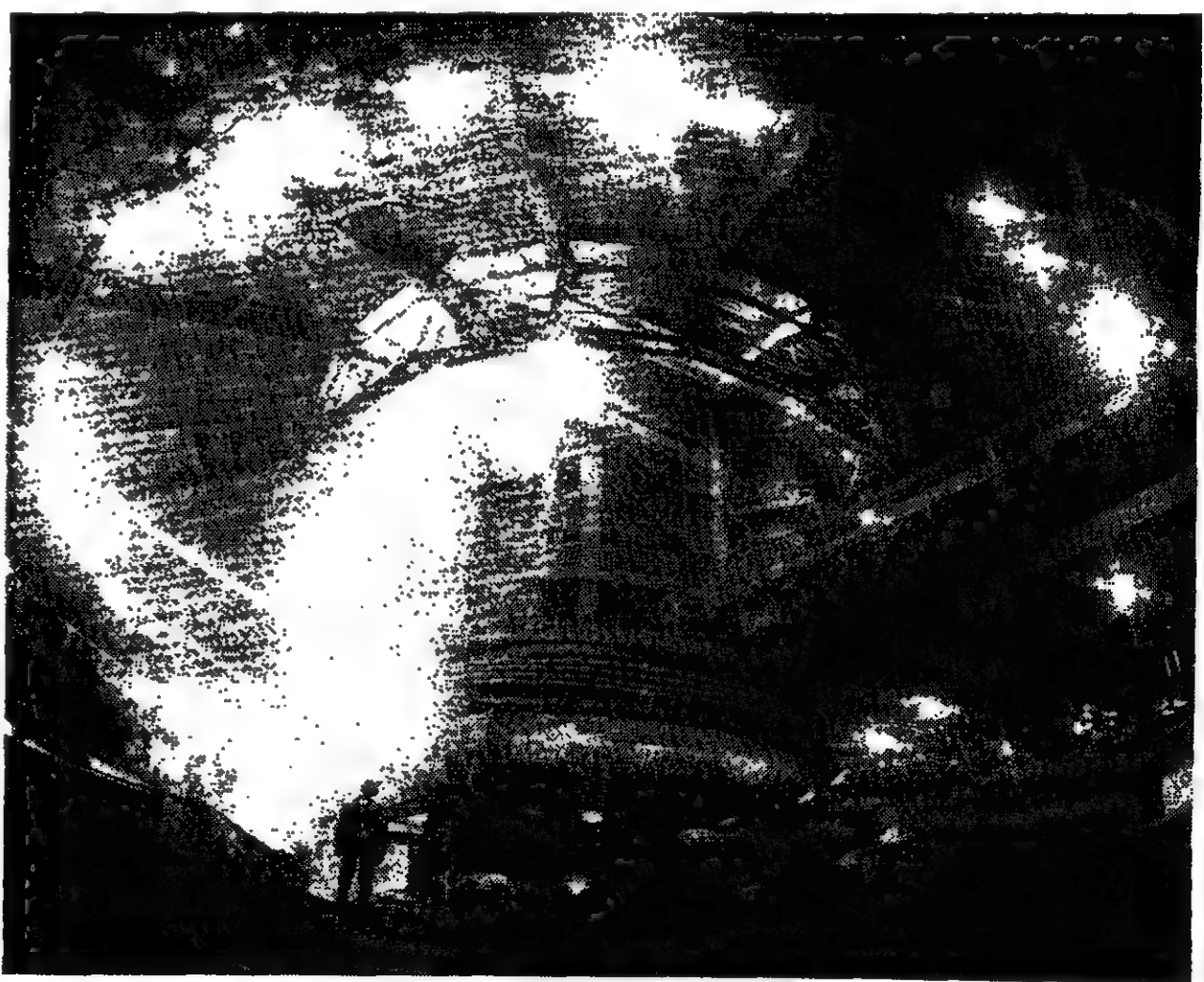
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An oil giant of the future

Ahmed Rashid discovers foreign investors competing for a share of the natural resources

Western and Asian oil companies have been flocking to Almaty to take up oil concessions as Kazakhstan aims to become the sixth largest oil producer in the world in the next century. With potential oil reserves of 95 billion barrels, eight billion of which are proven reserves, and more than four trillion cubic metres of gas reserves, not surprisingly Kazakhstan is being called the next Saudi Arabia.

After independence, American oil companies were the first to stake claims in Kazakhstan. Chevron and Mobil acquired the huge Tengiz field in western Kazakhstan, promising a potential ten-year investment programme of up to \$20 billion. But until this year, these companies were hampered by Russia in their efforts to build export pipelines across the former Soviet Union to get the oil to Europe and the Gulf.

However, on May 16, Kazakhstan signed a landmark contract with Oman, Russia and several Western oil companies, including British Gas, to build a \$2 billion, 1,500-kilometre pipeline from Tengiz to the Black Sea. Russia agreed to the project only after its oil companies were given a large stake in it.

Asian companies have also moved in quickly. In June, China's National Petroleum Company (CNPC) beat the American companies Texaco and Amoco to win a major oil concession in which CNPC would invest about \$4 billion in the Aktyubinsk oil enterprise, taking a 60 per cent share.

The Kazakhs received a signature bonus (a cash bonus on signing the contract) of \$320 million from the Chinese, which the Government said would go towards paying off the backlog in unpaid salaries and pensions. China also promised to build a pipeline from the concession to Xinjiang in eastern China and said that it would help Kazakhstan build a pipeline to

the Gulf through Iran. Last month, CNPC won a tender giving it 60 per cent of the huge Uzen oil field, also in western Kazakhstan. CNPC promised an immediate investment of \$400 million out of a total projected investment of \$1.3 billion and paid Kazakhstan a \$52 million signature bonus.

However, this summer, global interest in Kazakhstan's energy resources accelerated at a remarkable pace. The reason was that in July the US Administration for the first time said that it would not block or impose sanctions on a

proposed gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey that would traverse northern Iran. Oil companies have been barred from investing in Iran or building pipelines through it, because of the threat of American sanctions. Suddenly an opening through Iran offers Kazakhstan a viable route to the Gulf which avoids Russia.

Although possibly premature, leaders in Central Asia now presume that the Americans would not block multiple pipeline routes for their energy resources through Iran.

The shortest possible way from Kazakhstan to the Gulf is through Iran. All political barriers have been removed," President Nazarbayev said in Kuwait earlier this month, in answer to possible American objections to a pipeline to the Gulf. During his visit to three Gulf states, President Nazarbayev said that Kuwait would also help his country to extend oil and gas pipelines to the Gulf through Iran.

Last month Texaco at last won approval to acquire a 20 per cent stake in the Karachaganak oil and gas field from Britain's BG Exploration and Production and Italy's Agip, both of which will reduce their stakes.

Meanwhile Asian companies are moving in fast to bid for oil and gas concessions. Indonesian, Malaysian and several Japanese companies have already set up shop in Almaty. Indonesia's Medco



President Nazarbayev's policies have cleared the way for drilling in the Caspian

group and Japan's Mitsui have taken a stake in the Mangistau oil and gas production association in western Kazakhstan and are planning to invest more than \$4 billion during the next 20 years. Asian companies could move Central Asia towards its natural direction, which is towards Asia. Moreover, Asian companies are unfettered by the sanctions and political restraints faced by American companies.

However, Russia's powerful national gas company Gazprom reacted angrily to these deals, first cutting off the supply of gas to Kazakhstan's domestic users from gas fields in Siberia — a move that created an acute domestic summer crisis for the Govern-

ment. Gazprom's chief executive Rem Vyakhirev said that he would not let Kazakhstan export gas through Russian pipelines. "Under no circumstances will Kazakhstan export gas through Russia," Mr Vyakhirev said last month. "To give up one's market ... would be, at the very least, a crime before Russia," he added.

Russia then made it difficult for Kazakhstan and Western oil companies to continue development of the massive Karachaganak oil field, by not allowing the companies involved to use Russian pipelines to export oil and gas, as promised by Gazprom. Meanwhile Kazakhstan is

also rapidly privatising its ageing gas and oil pipeline system and refineries in an attempt to bring in foreign investment and new technology. Kazakhstan also plans to build several new oil refineries. In June, Belgium's Tractebel won a \$630 million contract to manage Kazakhstan's 9,000-kilometre gas pipeline system for 15 years, for which Kazakhstan received another \$30 million as a signature bonus.

It remains to be seen, however, whether Iran will prove a viable exit route for Kazakh energy. Only when that happens will the Kazakhs be assured that Western investment in other industrial fields, such as development of mineral resources, will follow.

David Rudnick pinpoints the growth sectors

Chance to invest in new markets

Agriculture accounts for about 30 per cent of Kazakhstan's national product and more than 40 per cent of the population is rural. Farming has yet to prove profitable — most farmers are crippled by debt — and is likely to become so only when farm prices and production methods are thoroughly market-oriented. In

the absence of an integrated national market, where prices are known to all producers and consumers, that day may still be some way off.

Farmers' co-operatives after the Western pattern would be an improvement, but starting them up would be costly and demand a considerable injection of capital. But companies are not exactly queuing to invest in Kazakhstan's agri-business. The epitome of old-style Soviet collectivism, agri-business retains a monopolistic character that puts most Western companies off.

Apart from Philip Morris, which acquired the state tobacco monopoly in 1994 on condition that it invested in the tobacco-growing region of Chirchik, there has been little interest.

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Perform, or no portfolio

A healthy banking system is critical for Kazakhstan's stable development, and steps are being taken to put banking on an even keel after the hyperinflationary shocks of recent years.

Inflation of 1,250 per cent has caused an understandable aversion to saving. The ratio of bank deposits to gross domestic product in Kazakhstan is one of the lowest in the world, as is its savings rate of barely 5 per cent.

The Government must rebuild confidence in the banking system, battered by the related crises of payments arrears and corporate insolvency. To this end, in January it passed legislation allowing it to acquire the shares of

The Government has taken action to restore confidence in the banking system. David Rudnick reports

bankrupt or underperforming banks hit by bad loans to enterprises ensnared in the debt crisis. Two of Kazakhstan's biggest banks, Turan Bank and Alen Bank, which together account for about 20 per cent of all sector loans, were nationalised (temporarily, it was hoped) and then merged to cut operating costs. Their subsequent recapitalisation by the National Bank (central bank) has provided a shot in the arm.

The Government's takeover of the two banks and subse-

quent classification of their portfolios as non-standard may have frozen their loans to an alarming number of enterprises, but the international financial community has hailed it as a step in the right direction.

Ron Freeman, of the investment bank Salomon Bros, believes the move has encouraged managements "to resolve the problems in their loan portfolios for fear of being taken over by the Government under the new law". Another banker adds:

"Bringing non-performing banks under the Government's wing has led to improved provisioning. The International Monetary Fund says it has also reduced non-performing loans in the system to 41 per cent, down from 55 per cent in 1994."

The Government's aim is to prop up Turan-Alen Bank until foreign capital deems it a viable concern.

But the underlying problem of corporate insolvency, a hangover from the Soviet past, remains unhealed. Freezing non-standard loans actually makes their repayment more uncertain, whatever its potential long-term benefits. In theory, argues Mr Freeman, the Government could clean up the banks' balance sheets "by substituting obligations to itself, smaller in face amount and longer in maturity than the banks' existing portfolios". But for this to work, he adds, "the Government would need to be sure it could repay its own obligations to the banks when they fall due, and that would depend on its revenues expanding appreciably".

Ultimately, he concludes, resolution of the problem depends on an improvement in the Government's sovereign creditworthiness, which will be the benchmark influencing future investment decisions by foreign pension funds and other institutions assessing Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, a system of domestic private pension funds is being devised by Grigori Marchenko, the high-flying head of the State Committee on Securities. His job is to develop the capital markets, and he sees private pension funds potentially investing their customers' contributions in banks and financial markets, alleviating the current dearth of domestically generated capital.

Most foreign banks and investing institutions are watching and waiting. The Dutch bank ABN-Amro has established a joint venture with Kazkommertsbank, specialising in foreign exchange and trade finance. But deeper commitment to purely domestic corporate and retail loan markets remains beyond the horizon.

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Almaty Merchant Bank

A joint venture with MeesPierson N.V.
Established on June 2, 1995
General license No. 239

Almaty Merchant Bank was established at the end of 1995, when the first signs of macroeconomic and financial stabilization appeared in Kazakhstan and the banking sector had been practically formed. However the extremely competitive environment in which AMB started its operations was not an obstacle, in the contrary, it made for the dynamic development of the newly-established bank.

AMB's success is based on several reasons. On one hand, AMB is a local Kazakhstani bank. The management board and the staff of the bank are almost fully represented by local specialists who perfectly understand all nuances of Kazakhstani business. On the other hand, due to wide international contacts, partnership and shareholding relations with leading Western financial institutions, AMB's activities go beyond the borders of Kazakhstan.

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The strategic priorities of the Bank are reliability and high technological level of services. The goal of AMB is to become a leader in the market of banking services in Kazakhstan by introducing international banking experience and advanced banking technologies.

Although AMB has been active on the market for a very short time since June 1996, it already has a reputation of a reliable and competitive financial institution with great opportunities.

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Over a short period of its existence AMB has built up a strong client base including major oil companies, trading companies, leading hotels as well as companies accounting for 2/3 of the country's alcohol, liqueur and winery production.

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In view of recent changes in the banking legislation of Kazakhstan, under which banks are allowed to participate in investment activities, Almaty Merchant Bank is considering setting up private pension funds, companies for management of pension assets, investment funds, insurance and leasing companies.

AMB is also planning to set up an affiliated brokerage firm for operations with Kazakh government securities.

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Sam Mendes's stunning Shakespeare at the National; strange Eastern rituals in the East End; Romanians in Bristol

Dark deeds played to thrill

The tragedy begins with Brabantio being roused from his bed in Venice, and ends with his daughter and son-in-law dead on their backs in Cyprus. Both are night-time scenes, and every other scene occurs at night or can plausibly be shown as happening then. In the dark, dark deeds are done.

In Sam Mendes's thrilling production the nocturnal dangers are given another sinister turn of the screw by being set in enclosed spaces. Anthony Ward's permanent design of heavy wooden blinds, beyond and above a deep verandah, trap the characters as if in a cul de sac.

This sense of a psychological imprisonment is further reinforced by Paul Pyant's unrelenting lighting. His shadows build up tension as powerfully as in the masterworks of German silent film. Iago's profile opens and shuts its mouth against a pillar; the shadows of an overhead fan whirl around Othello's head as he sinks irretrievably into his madness. These are not passing tricks but the outward expression of inward states.

Othello Cottesloe

At three and a quarter hours the play is longer than usual. But only towards the end are the scenes, or the gaps between them, moving more slowly than feels right. Till then, paradoxically, the plot seems to hurtle. Another paradox: the speed is related to the quality of physical detail, precise and rich, that Mendes gives the scenes. Just one tiny example: a table is set with a jug of lemon juice and more glasses than will eventually be used. After all, how do servants know how many guests are going to be offered a drink?

Set sometime in the 1930s or 1940s — Colin Tierney's Cassio reads an old Penguin Classic — the uniforms, dresses and office furniture all make their contribution to the sober reality against which the dreadful effects of wickedness are played out. The focus is Simon Russell Beale's unforgettable Iago, spruce in his service uniform with its Sam Browne sash, holding him together.

He gives his face an expression of mean cynicism while the eyes are alert to how his phrases are received. His voice makes use of the mocker's trick of evacuating breath on a word to point the follies of all pretension — and all honour too. And there is devoted sadism in his final scene with Claire Skinner's Desdemona.

With her figure delicate enough to excite the soldierly, Skinner gives us a girl whose truth of feeling never departs from her. The body may appear frail but the voice is firm: no milkop, though inexperience has set bounds to her understanding.

The speech of David Harewood's strongly built Moor emphatically separates his two characters: the spouter of rhetoric, and the man in whom "those soft parts of conversation" are so lacking that he breaks his sentences into single words. At times this becomes a mannerism but over Desdemona's dead body his voice exposes real pain. He has recovered his wits but lost his world.

JEREMY KINGSTON

Parables without purpose

YOU can't miss the sense of event that hovers like joss-stick incense over the National Theatre Studio/Indosia staging of Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra*. The venue is largely to blame. Finding this strange 18th-century warehouse on an island in the East End proves as much a pilgrimage as the Narmada River is to the characters of Mehta's novel.

Rosa Maggiora's 40ft set taps superbly into the atmosphere. A river of light sparkles against the brickwork. A rocky bank, framed on either side by a guesthouse and a temple, dominates the space. The audience are scattered on cushions; a lucky few hog benches at the back; the unlucky many, out on wings, have terrible sightlines.

What unfolds is a series of stories that hinge around Sam Dastor's retired civil servant

A River Sutra Three Mills Island Studios

who owns the guesthouse. Having renounced the city in search of peace he puzzles over the mystic grip of the river, a symbol of lust and absolution. Never has renunciation seemed such a middle-class sport. Dastor's benign Hindu makes chaste small-talk with Scott Ransome's unconvincing postman. One expects cucumber sandwiches to start appearing. Instead, a Jain monk (Andrew Mallet) happens by, and we see his life story enacted as a dreamy sketch.

The monk, it transpires, has abandoned his diamond fortune to "live in the world". Suitably horrified, Dastor's

civil servant consults the local wise man (Talat Hussain), who tells him the story of an impoverished musician, his nagging wife, and the discovery of a blind beggar boy with the voice of an angel. So it goes: small parables sprouting organically from the compost of Tanika Gupta's wholesome adaptation.

The Roald Dahl twists, which inspire spiritual angst in the civil servant, did little for me. It's all very pastoral, slow-moving and unbelievable. The actors rarely succeed in inhabiting their parts and the mixed casting sometimes makes Indhu Rubasingham's production look like the last days of the Raj rather than the intended celebration of religious diversity.

JAMES CHRISTOPHER



Simon Russell Beale is an unforgettable Iago, "his face an expression of mean cynicism", in the National's *Othello*

Hearts in chains

HOW little we know of how other people live, how little we know of those we have loved, and what scant attention we pay to whoever tries to shift our feelings. Jeremy Kingston writes. These are some of the themes Lin Coghlan's characters illustrate as they learn from each other that insularity may start as defence but can turn into a prison.

A preview on this page last week told some of the background to this pioneering co-production by the BOV, Clear Day Productions and Teatrul

With Love From Nicolae Bristol Old Vic

Dramatic. Constanta, Romania's Black Sea port. The play is set in Constanta, partly on the seashore but mainly in the house and garden of a family whose favoured son, Nicolae, defected to England. In London his warm-heartedness permanently captivated an Irish woman, Maggie, so that long after he has left her, seemingly to return home, she reveres his memory.

Her 17-year-old son Nicky is sick of hearing about him. Reluctantly he accompanies her on a journey to discover his father's family, and in Constanta a healing and liberating process begins.

Coghlan confidently weaves allegory into her story. A dying birch tree leans to one side of Carmencia Brojboiu's magically suggestive, set, planted by Nicolae, it is passionately protected by his sister, Iuliana (Monica Mănescu). On the opposite side a hen-house perches: to relieve the hens' imprisonment Iuliana's young daughter Gabi (Medea Marinescu) has stuck pictures on its inside walls. Metaphorical prisons have enclosed them all.

Of course Maggie's idol does not have feet of gold, but Nicola Redmond's performance shows us how anxiously she has needed such an idol. Philip Osment's direction smoothly moves the focus across the group, now gathering its members around the table, now separating them into smaller units. Liviu Manolache's music adds an other-worldly thrill.

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Ulysses journeys up north

The actor David Threlfall explains his new role: a Lancastrian version of Homer's wanderer



David Threlfall: a career ranging from Smike in the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby* to Hollywood thrillers

David Threlfall has "played Greek" on stage once before, and the title of a new comedy by Richard Hope may mislead you into thinking he is about to play it again. Ten years ago, at the Manchester Royal Exchange, he was the king who kills his father and marries his mother, but the bloody catharsis of *Oedipus Rex* is a world away from his mock heroic character in Hope's *Odysseus Thump*.

Hope, writer in residence at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, has produced a kind of northern *Ulysses*, following in Joyce's footsteps by transforming an ordinary man into a 30th-century incarnation of Homer's wanderer. Instead of Leopold Bloom in Dublin, 1904, we have Norman Nestor (Threlfall) in Failsforth, Lancs, 1997.

During a weekend of reflection and heavy drinking, Norman, late fifties, unemployed and unhappily married — stumbles through a series of encounters, with characters whose mythic equivalents are clear: a Circe-like seductress, a one-eyed footballer called Horace Clossy.

"The parallels with *Odysseus* are there, and the set will reflect that Greek, mythic quality," says Threlfall. "But Richard wrote the play in homage to his late grandfather, not Homer, and in essence this is an optimistic piece about a man who realises he's reached a certain point in his life — and that realisation hits him like a truck."

While the accents and dialect of *Odysseus Thump* are Lancashire through and through, Threlfall, who grew up in Manchester, says Hope has steered clear of the brand of northern drama that tends to be "parochial and full of stupid people. You should feel that Norman's story could happen anywhere in the world."

Accent apart, Threlfall — lean, tall and, even with a full beard, looking younger than 43 — might seem an improbable choice for the hapless, overweight Norman. A strap-on beer belly will flesh him out on stage, but Jude Kelly, who is directing *Odysseus Thump* in the Playhouse's Courtyard Theatre, told him she had

originally planned to cast somebody older.

However, like anyone else who remembers Threlfall as Smike, in the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby*, or as Leslie Titmus, the reptilian Tory "hero" of John Mortimer's *Paradise Postponed*, Kelly has witnessed the absolute conviction with which he can inhabit vastly different characters.

The son of a builder, he had an "unexciting" childhood in Burnage, the Manchester district Liam and Noel Gallagher also used to call home. He thought about becoming a footballer or an artist, until the lasting influence of his school drama teachers pushed him into acting.

Training at Manchester Polytechnic was followed by a role in the BBC's infamous horstal play, *Scum*. Then, in 1979, came the RSC, and Smike. Threlfall's performance as the lame, abused orphan, his body and speech heartbreakingly twisted, was astonishing. It earned him three awards at home, plus Tony and Emmy nominations for the Broadway transfer and the television recording, seen by almost two million viewers as part of Channel 4's first autumn schedule.

Married to "a wonderful woman", with whom he has a

one-year-old son, he speaks slowly and quietly, and gives off an air of unshakeable calm. No wonder Ford was happy to have him exuding assurance behind the wheel of a gleaming Monda in its 1994 TV commercial (think moody, meaningless shots of Threlfall returning home on small ferry, intercut with *Don't Look Now*-style glimpses of little girl in red raincoat).

The equanimity does not waver when he recalls popping plastic wedges behind his ears to play Prince Charles in

the NBC mini-series of *Diana: Her True Story* or his unsuccessful attempt to break into Hollywood.

"Several years ago I went to LA to have a go at sitting around the pool — which simply means waiting for that big call to come. But I was just one of thousands trying to get a break."

He did manage to leave his mark on two major league movies, playing Sean Connery's MIS minder in *The Russia House*, and the hard-bitten Ulster cop murdered by Sean Bean's fugitive terrorist in *Patriot Games*.

"At my *Patriot Games* audition, I asked Philip Noyce, the director: 'Do you want a proper character — or do you just want someone to say the lines?' I can upset people by saying things like that. I don't mean to, I'm just trying to find out what's required."

"I'd love to do a film like *Shine*, something that allows an actor to put the physicality of theatre on screen. But I'd rather do a play like *Odysseus Thump* than pick up crumbs off Hollywood tables. I love being in a room with actors and working things out. I trailed home from rehearsals a few nights ago thinking 'This is where I want to be.' In my blood I'm a theatre animal."

DANIEL ROSENTHAL

● *Odysseus Thump* previews at the Courtyard, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds (0113 213 7700) from today



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Reality is a loving cup of rosy Leigh

NEW MOVIES: Geoff Brown
 relishes the way Mike Leigh makes
 you care about his *Career Girls*

Student days. The domestic squalor. The unappetising meals, scraped together from onions, ketchup, anything handy. The verbal jockeying for position. The drinking. The partying. Scenes in Mike Leigh's latest film, *Career Girls*, will bring back memories for many, although you have to approach his North London Polytechnic students through an unusually thick veil of caricature.

Hannah (Katrin Cartledge) maintains a protective barrier of low-level puns and prickly remarks. Annie, her flatmate (Lynda Steadman), is a cringing mouse with downcast eyes and a serious skin problem. "Looks like you done the tango with a cheese grater," Hannah says. As for Ricky, the unstable, burly loafer played by Mark Benton, scarcely a word emerges without being prefaced by an "er", or a finger poked towards an eye.

The level of artifice shown in *Career Girls* takes you by surprise. After the breadth and depth of *Secrets & Lies*, Leigh seems intent on recapturing old vices: reducing people to cruel cartoons, showing talking heads up on the screen without any regard for visual niceties.

But there is a method to Leigh's madness. These scenes are set in the past; and he paints with broad strokes to chart the difference between then and now, when Hannah and Annie meet up again as mature women of 30 with careers, quirks largely ironed out, rediscovering their relationship during one weekend in London.

Over the weekend, Hannah and Annie run into other remnants from their past. Another flatmate jogs past on Hampstead Heath; an estate agent is revealed as Adrian, a student Lothario; while Ricky is encountered, unfortunately, in severe mental disarray, clutching a toy elephant and parked on the steps by their old flat. Viewed realistically, these coincidences take some swallowing; but they help to bind us to the characters and encourage us to journey with them through their hopes, fears and disappointments, facing our own in return.

The tonal range is wide. Ricky's inarticulate expression of love recalls the uncomfortable mood of Leigh's first film, *Meat Market*. When the women pose for a lark as house-hunters, social satire comes into play: "I suppose on a clear day you can see the class struggle from here," Hannah comments from a flat high above Docklands. Whatever the tone, Cartledge, Steadman and the rest convey it with conviction. By the end of this wayward yet touching film, Leigh's caricatures have become living people, mirrors for ourselves; and you want the best for these career girls as they make the best of their faults and foibles.

From Leigh's version of reality we turn to Hollywood's. Opulence and good looks everywhere. Big city glamour. Look at the celebrations in *My Best Friend's Wedding*, held on a Chicago estate garlanded with roses, balloons, burning and the

Career Girls

Curzon West End

15.87 mins

Modest, wayward and touching Mike Leigh

My Best Friend's Wedding

Warner West End

12.105 mins

Can Julia Roberts also be funny?

Gallivant

Everyman, 15.103 mins

New blood for British cinema

Photographing Fairies

Empire, 15.106 mins

Good images, bad drama

Deep Crimson

Metro, 18.114 mins

Morbid entertainment from Mexico

painted faces of the rich. All this plus Julia Roberts, tousled hair flowing freely. The other week, in *Conspiracy Theory*, she worked for the Justice Department. Here she pretends to be a New York food critic. But the only role she plays convincingly is Julia Roberts, megastar.

Luckily, *My Best Friend's Wedding* has more to offer than escapist opulence and the tired story of two women fighting over one man. It comes with kinks, and a larger sense of character than other recent romantic comedies. The director P.J. Hogan, the Australian who gave us *Muriel's Wedding*, is not afraid of lurching into fantasy, or giving characters a tart coating. Take Roberts herself: long the best friend of Dermot Mulroney, she boils into a rage when he decides to marry Cameron Diaz, beautiful offspring of a Chicago tycoon. Invited to the wedding, Roberts does her best to derail the journey to the altar. Spite does not make a pretty woman.

Possibly the film would have greater bite with an altered cast. Diaz cannot be faulted: she makes her wealthy bride likeable from the moment she appears at Chicago airport in a violent yellow dress, showering Roberts with hugs. With Roberts, though, we must fill out the blanks in her sculptured face



Lynda Steadman and Katrin Cartledge in Mike Leigh's *Career Girls*, a film very different from *Secrets & Lies*, but equally impressive in its own way

to gauge her anguish and guilt: the role really needs Jean Arthur, Claudette Colbert, or some other mistress of sophisticated comedy from Hollywood's Golden Age.

As for the men, Dermot Mulroney is an affable stooge, swept up in the whirlpool of women's desires. He is never as Robert's gay editor, who flies to Chicago to stoke the fires of jealousy by posing, improbably, as Robert's fiancé. The role could easily have been a mincing caricature, but Everett sails through with elegance and ease, stealing every scene.

We return to Britain for *Gallivant*, the week's most idiosyncratic and joyous movie. Since it avoids all fiction and deals with real people out and about before the camera, it could, I suppose, be labelled a documentary. But this suggests something cold and dull; and Andrew Kotting's first feature-length creation fairly bounces along as it follows the progress of the film-maker, his 85-year-old grandmother and seven-year-old daughter around the coast of Britain.

armed with blunt words and a teacup hat, knitted for Christmas by a neighbour. But we are made gently aware of the differing frailties of young and old, and the need to forge bonds and understanding before too much time passes.

Ironically, the only member of the trio who comes to harm is Kotting himself, who shatters an ankle. But the viewer feels in safe hands as he steers us through family drama, sociology, geography, and vi-

sual poetry. *Gallivant* is a real tonic: it warms the heart, stimulates the eye and brain, and opens up new paths for British cinema.

Photographing Fairies, another British film helped by lottery money, contains striking sights, but is likely to send audiences home scratching their heads. The hero is wildly unsympathetic: a photographer, bereaved on his honeymoon in 1913, who becomes obsessed with a belief in

fairies. Possibly if we shared his grief we could understand what drives him on; as the film stands, neither the script nor Toby Stephens's performance allows us intimacy. The images of John de Borman are frequently lush and lively, but director Nick Willing, experienced at commercials and music videos, cannot shape the material into anything entertaining or edifying. *Deep Crimson*, from Mexico's leading director Arturo

Ripstein, suggests more grim times ahead: what fun can you get from an overweight nurse and a seedy gigolo exploiting, then murdering, vulnerable widows and spinsters? In fact, Ripstein's controlling hand and an exemplary cast headed by Daniel Giménez-Cacho and Regina Orozco provide morbid amusement in plenty. Ripstein is a master at moody melodramas and love stories gone wrong, and this story spotlights all his strengths.



Edén Kotting and Gladys Morris on a touching and powerful trip round Britain in Edén's dad's *Gallivant*

They start at Bexhill-on-Sea's De La Warr Pavilion. Then they move clockwise, down to Cornwall, up to Cumbria for a spirited performance of *D'Ye Ken John Peel*, across and over to John o'Groats, down to Middlesbrough, circling round to Kent and Sussex, where they meet a café owner who has removed his table tops because people's cups kept leaving marks.

Kotting has an eye for the eccentric. He is no sobersides himself, and likes to lark about with his camera. But beyond the frisky surface, punctured by landscapes and clouds scudding by in fast motion, lies a strong and vibrant human core. Kotting's daughter Eden has Joubert's syndrome, which restricts her communication to sign language and will probably curtail her life. His grandmother Gladys appears indomitable,

NEW ON VIDEO

ASHES AND DIAMONDS

Eureka, 18.1998

ANDRZEJ WAJDA's unplanned trilogy about his own generation of Polish youth reached a striking conclusion with this famous drama about a nationalist underground operative (Zbigniew Cybulski) sent to assassinate a Communist leader in the days following the Second World War. But this is no simple period film: Cybulski's dark glasses and disillusionment made him a rebel hero, while Wajda's forceful, expressionist style left realism far behind.

BOX OF MOONLIGHT

First Independent, 15.1996

JOHN TURTURRO, an over-meticulous electrical engineer, discovers the wonders of anarchy and the open road with a free spirit called the Kid (Sam Rockwell). Tom DiCillo's philosophical road movie tries too hard for goofy comedy and winsome charm, but there are many incidental pleasures en route. Available to rent.

THE CRUCIBLE

Fox Guild, 12.1996

EARNSTRESS taints Nicholas Hyman's attempt to film Arthur Miller's play about 17th-century witchcraft. As Abigail, the girl who spreads the witchcraft rumours in Salem, Massachusetts, Winona Ryder tries hard, but always seems a modern girl in period clothes, and never connects with Daniel Day-Lewis.

the farmer who enjoyed her favours. The temperature rises with Paul Scofield, cast as the trial judge. But his caressing of the text only underlines the material's best home: the theatre. Available to rent.

THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Orbit, PG. 1960

"FEED me, feces-filled me!" cries the exotic plant hatched in Mushnik's flower shop on Skid Row. So its hapless creator (Jonathan Haze) keeps up a supply of the best food available: people. Roger Corman's loopy black comedy was shot in two days, mostly on a single set, but the script and performances are so bright that the time restrictions never cause damage.

STAR TREK FIRST CONTACT

CIC, 15.1996

PATRICK STEWART battles the Borgs, who threaten to muck up history by barging in on Earth in the year 2063, and assimilating many of the Enterprise crew as they cruise the Universe. This second vehicle for the cast of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is an acceptable adventure, with grandiose sights and sleek special effects, but not much sense of fun. Jonathan Frakes (Commander Riker) directs. Available to rent.

GEOFF BROWN

SNAP VERDICT

Every week, young film fans discuss the latest releases...

CAREER GIRLS

Leslie Isaiah Thomas, 29: As profound and insightful as *Secrets & Lies*. No other director portrays our nation so truthfully.

Dominic Young, 18: The performances are complex and accomplished. Go see it!

Laura Brook, 19: Great entertainment. At once funny and sad.

Eleanor Zeal, 18: You're going to love it!

MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING

Leslie: The director of *Muriel's Wedding* comes up with another movie containing an odd mix of comedy and drama.

Dominic: Rupert Everett is good, but blink and you'll miss him. Julia Roberts looks very uncomfortable; perhaps she was required to act.

Laura: This just about qualifies as a comedy, but there was an odd, cruel edge to it.

Eleanor: Rather disappointing: a comedy with few laughs.

PHOTOGRAPHING FAIRIES

Leslie: A clumsy screenplay with bad directing and bad acting.

Dominic: It just seemed never to end.

Laura: Long and boring. Virtually all the actors' performances were big and stagey. Eleanor: A beautifully photographed movie with nothing else to recommend it.

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LONDON

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LES ARTS FLOISSANTS: The acclaimed Baroque group under its director William Christie opens the autumn classical music season with a weekend devoted to Baroque theatre, music and dance. On tonight's programme are semi-staged performances of two chamber operas by Charpentier, *Les Fêtes de Versailles* and *Le Descent de Cordelière* (see review). **Barbican, St. John's, EC2 (0171-638 8801)** Tonight, 7.30pm. **£**

A MAN IN A ROOM, GAMBLING: The remarkable British composer Gavin Bryars and the Gavin Bryars Ensemble team up with the Spanish sculptor and musician Juan Muñoz for a series of short contemporary music on cards. **BBC Media Village, One Deodar Road, W9 (0171-336 8803)** Tonight, 10pm and Sat 8pm.

THE MIRADOR: David Pountney's revival for English National Opera of Jonathan Miller's updated version of Gilbert and Sullivan's mock-Japanese satire on all things English. **Richmond Theatre, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 (0171-878 0000)** Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat Sat, 2.30pm.

ELSEWHERE: The City Ballet of London begins its autumn tour here tonight with the world premiere of its new

TODAY'S CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Mark Hargreaves

production of The Sleeping Beauty Award-winning choreographer Michael Ballou's neo-classical interpretation of the ballet takes its inspiration from Tchaikovsky's glorious score, highlighting the magic of the story as well as the psychological elements of its acts. **Orchard Theatre, Home Gardens, (01222 220000)** Tonight, 7.45pm; mat Sat, 2.30pm. **£**

LEEDS: David Threlkeld plays the wanderer in Richard Hogg's *Odyssseus*. After being dropped from his

NORMA WATSON AND FAMILY plays in Norwich

THE MIRADOR: David Pountney's revival for English National Opera of Jonathan Miller's updated version of Gilbert and Sullivan's mock-Japanese satire on all things English. **Richmond Theatre, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 (0171-878 0000)** Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat Sat, 2.30pm.

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THEATRE GUIDE

Jersey Kingdon's assessment of theatre showing in London

■ Seats full, returns only
■ Seats at all prices

■ THE HERALD: Peter White's fascinating play. **Kate Ditchfield** plays Shakespeare's daughter and **Michael Ford** plays her physician husband. **Duchess, Catherine Street, WC2 (0171-494 5075)** Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; mat Wed and Sat, 2.30pm. **£**

■ THE BRIDE AND THE BROTHER: Another comedy by the Redwood Theatre Company, said to put the fun back into hand-to-hand combat. **Belgrade, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0171-484 5020)** Mon-Sat, 8pm, mat Wed, 3pm, Sat, 5pm.

■ A CHASTE MAID IN CHESHIRE: From the pen of London's foremost comedy writer, **Neil Patrick Harris** plays the comical cuckold. **Globe, New London Way, SE1 (0171-318 4700)** Tonight, 7.30pm.

■ DO YOU WANT ME OFF MY FEET? The **Flight Size** (Sally Foley and Hannah McColl) follow their excellent show *Calling Me* with this new comedy. The characters are comically locked in a bathroom, and all their attempts at escape are thwarted. **Lyric Theatre, King Street, Hammerstein, W8 (0171-741 2211)** Mon-Sat, 8pm, mat Sat, 4.30pm.

■ THE WATERLOO WOMEN: Frisky tale of an aspiring black film-maker, written by, directed by, and starring, **Cheryl Dunye**. **ICA (0171-330 3647)**

■ THE PULL MONTY (15): Unemployed steelworkers strip for cash. **Boulevard Theatre, with Robert Carlyle, Tom Wilkinson, Mark Addy, Director, Peter Cattanach, Chichester Picture House (0171-498 3273)** Greenfield (0181-236 3005) Odeon, Camden (0171-498 3273) Odeon, Camden (0181-236 3005) **£**

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Tongue-tied in the house of a master

In a third extract from *Solti on Solti* the great conductor is overcome by nerves as he joins Richard Strauss for a memorable lunch

I met Richard Strauss only a few times, but he had a great influence on my professional life. Strauss had spent the immediate postwar years in Switzerland, where he composed his Four Last Songs, but he returned to his home in Garmisch, in the Bavarian Alps, shortly before his 55th birthday, on June 11, 1919. By then, I was music director of the Bavarian State Opera.

In honour of Strauss's homecoming, the Staatsoper put on a new production of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Strauss, whose health was frail, declined to attend the public performances, but he let us know that he would come to the dress rehearsal.

As a conductor first diving into this vast score, one feels absolutely lost in the mass of sound and action. If I had to do my first *Rosenkavalier* today with the composer in the audience, I would die of fear.

During the intermission between the second and third acts at that dress rehearsal a short news documentary was filmed, showing Strauss conducting for a few minutes. I have a copy of the film; and today it amazes me to see myself — a young man, with hair — standing behind the elderly composer, who was born more than 130 years ago. As I brought him into the pit, he said to the orchestra, "Good morning, gentlemen." He then sat down and I stood behind him. He asked me, "Where are the horns sitting?"

"The horns are on the left, the trumpets on the right," Dr Strauss said. "I can no longer see or hear very well," he said. Then an astonishing thing happened: as soon as he began to conduct, the fearfulness of old age was replaced with power and control. He began with the waltz at the end of the second act. Just before Ochs's musical entrance, Strauss, though nearly blind, automatically looked up at the stage and gave a cue with the instinctive assurance of a seasoned *Kapellmeister*.

Shortly afterwards, I went to Garmisch to accompany a violinist in a performance of Strauss's Violin and Piano Sonata, in a small concert being given to celebrate his 85th birthday. When we had finished, Strauss said to me, "Come and visit me. I would like to talk to you." Two or three weeks later, I visited him at his home, and I brought along three scores: *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Elektra* and *Salome*.

When I rang the bell, the door was opened not by a servant but by Strauss himself. He took me into the room where he worked, overlooking the well-kept garden of his villa and the distant mountains. His work table was in front of the window, and it was hard to imagine that these tranquil, orderly, bourgeois surroundings had been the

birthplace of his two most violent operas, *Salome* and *Elektra*. I stood there tongue-tied, clutching my scores. He sensed my nervousness and, to put me at ease, he asked me to sit down and tell him the latest gossip at the opera. His tactic worked: because we were trading gossip, I lost my fear of him. In short, he treated me like a colleague, and I quickly overcame my shyness.

I asked Strauss how certain tempi in *Rosenkavalier* ought to be performed: he gave me an all-purpose answer, "It's very easy," he said. "I set Holmansthal's text at the pace at which I would speak it, with a natural speed and in a natural rhythm. Just recite the text and you will find the right tempi."

Strauss had a unique talent for setting words. He told me to conduct the waltz in one beat to the bar, not in three. "Don't do what Clemens Krauss so often does," he said. "He beats the waltz in three. Try to stay in one. This makes the phrasing more natural." This is, of course, much more difficult, but I've always tried to follow his advice.

Apart from these comments on the tempi in *Rosenkavalier*, he did not want to discuss his own music. He asked me, "Do you know Tristan?"

"Yes, I've conducted it," I said.

"Then tell me why, in the last chord, all the instruments play except the cor anglais."

"That is true: even the harp plays the last chord, but the cor anglais drops out for the last three bars, in B major. I couldn't tell him why."

"The cor anglais represents the love potion," he said, "and by the last chord, when both Tristan and Isolde are dead, the effects of the potion have ended."

I later reported the story to my dear friend Willi Schuch, the musicologist and critic who had "discovered" me in Zurich a few years earlier, and who was Strauss's friend and biographer. "Oh, don't take it badly," Schuch told me. "He likes to trick everyone by asking that question."

That day I spent about two and a half hours with Strauss, including lunch, for which his wife joined us. The daughter of a general, she was known in her youth as the soprano Pauline de Anna. Strauss had dedicated many songs to her, both before and after their marriage. She was famous for being strict and difficult, and to the end of her husband's life she used to say, "I have married a *mésalliance*. I should have married an officer, not a composer."

While we were at table, Strauss asked me, "Warum fuchst Sie so, wenn Sie dirigieren?" (Why do you wave your arms around so much when

you conduct?) "You beat too much and your gestures are far too big."

Frau Strauss immediately said, "Richard, you know perfectly well that you gestulated terribly when you were young. The doctor even said you might damage your heart."

"Yes, it's absolutely true," he admitted, laughing. Everyone knows that the mature Strauss was a model of economy in his conducting gestures. He must have been quite wild as a young man. Immediately after lunch, Frau Strauss said, abruptly, "Young man, you must go now. Richard must take a nap."

He courageously protested, "Oh, don't send him away yet. Just a little bit more time. I want to put some little drops of wisdom into him." I remember those words precisely. But she was insistent, and so I said goodbye.

"Do come back in September," Strauss said. "We can talk more then." In particular, he wanted to talk about Mozart, and I would have loved to hear what he had to say about *Figaro*, which was his favourite opera, and *Così fan tutte*, which he was known to have conducted brilliantly. But he had a heart attack a few weeks later and died on September 8.

I conducted at his funeral. As he had requested in his will, the music was the final trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Afterwards, Frau Strauss came over to thank me. She was heavily veiled, and the proud general's daughter had turned into a broken, weeping old woman. She did not last long after, unable to live without her beloved Richard.

A few years ago, when I was conducting Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Salzburg Festival, I saw Strauss's grandson, as he was talking in a friend's garden, he told me that after the war his grandfather had despaired for the future of German opera houses, most of which were in ruins and the rest of which were an artistic and administrative shambles. He thought this was the end — and in a sense it was, because the old German lyric theatre tradition died out within the following decade. But he told his family, after my visit to Garmisch, "This young man gives me a little hope."

I hadn't known what he said at the time, but I was delighted to hear it 45 years later. I think Strauss must have sensed my enthusiasm and determination to do as much as I could, as well as I could. But I regret very much that my time with him was so short, because his advice has been a guide for me throughout my entire career.

● Extracted from *Solti on Solti*, published by Charles E. Windus



Sir Georg Solti: "Strauss's advice has guided me through my career"

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The boys are back in gowns

There are times when classical ballet just begs to be parodied. Who can watch the four cygnets in Act II of *Swan Lake* without marvelling at their potential hilarity? Who can follow the fantastic scenarios of many a 19th-century Russian ballet and not wonder at the absurdity of their storytelling? The artifice and convention of dance's "high art" leave it ripe for affectionate send-up. And no one knows this better than the all-male Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo.

They have been spoofing the form ever since 1974 when a group of ballet enthusiasts got together in New York to present "a playful, entertaining view of classical ballet in parody form and en travesti". They started life "in the late-late shows in Off-Off Broadway off's"; 23 years later they are an international fixture, sending audiences all over the world into fits of giggles. They have danced with Shirley MacLaine, with Kermi and Miss Piggy: the Japanese love them so much they have to visit Japan each and every year to meet the demand.

The minute these hefty blokes put on tutus and pointe shoes they get a laugh—a broad shoulder, hairy chest and big galumphing feet are not the usual attributes of a world-class ballerina. But the Trockers don't rely on cheap effect for their humour. There are pratfalls and pile-ups, silly faces

DANCE

Les Ballets Trockadero Peacock

and slapstick—the usual stuff of farce. Yet the 13 men also get out there and dance steps as the choreographer intended—well, almost—pivoting fearlessly on pointe with all the conviction of a true ballerina.

Vanya Vertikosa (Brian Norris in real life) certainly believes she is the world's greatest Odette, God's gift to both Siegfried and the stage. Wearing a ferocious grin defined by lurid red lips, and with feet like seal flippers, she transforms Ivanov's beautiful and mournful heroine into a grotesque, come-hither-eyed tart. Around her prance a corps de ballet of six swans, a vicious pack of frantically no prince would want to encounter. And the can-can-ing cygnets are just as delightfully daft as you imagined they could be.

The Trockers perform all of Act II of *Swan Lake*; it is their signature work. And unlike Matthew Bourne, who famously gender-bent *Swan Lake* for his own artistic ends, the Trockers are, in a roundabout way, balletomanes paying homage to the past. How many other companies have *Esmeralda* and *Paquita* in

their repertoire these days? The boys of the Trockers love their Russian ballet, and they know their ballerinas (and, indeed, mimic their favourites shamelessly), but the secret of their success is that they can play to insiders and novices alike. You don't need to get the joke to appreciate the humour.

Sometimes you can even forget they are men. Margaux Munday (Yonny Manauire) for instance, gave us an *Esmeralda* so wondrously modest on Tuesday night that just for a moment you could believe you were seeing the real thing.

Petipa's *Paquita*, which closed the evening, shows how much standards of performance have improved since the Trockers last appeared in London in 1988. They put their stronger technique to good use in the virtuosic choreography, although I don't suppose anyone in the audience really noticed. They were too busy chuckling at Roland Deaulin's (it helps to say the name out loud) hilariously sussed Cavalier and Fifi Barkova's wickedly accurate ballerina (at least I think I guessed whom she was lampooning). The names on their passports, by the way, are David Teirault and Manolo Molina. And, yes, they did get flowers at the end, handed out by someone named Darcey Bussell.

DEBRA CRAINE



Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo in action on Tuesday: "The minute these hefty blokes put on tutus and pointe shoes they get a laugh"

The veteran is still the best

PETER SCHREIER, a senior jury member at the weekend's International Song Competition, laid himself open to judgment only two days later in a recital accompanied by the jury's chairman, Graham Johnson.

One day we shall be convinced that Schreier is not eternal; but for the time being this elder statesman of Lieder sings on with the voice of a younger and healthier the longer the evening progresses.

Schreier's secret, at 62, is one which singers a third his age seem reluctant to learn. Every one who entered the competition should have been compelled to stay on for the German tenor's recital. They would have learnt that the art must be as alert as the composer's own to every flicker of the poetry's pulse, and realised just how hard the imagination must work in order to fine-tune the voice and control both it and the audience.

Schreier sang Schumann's *Die Heide* like a man in his prime—which, of course, he is not. But the setting of the voice's own shifting colours and capabilities to the expressive contours of the music can create a new perfection: in his case, the

RECITAL

Peter Schreier Wigmore Hall

articulation of emotional fragility, of lightly inflected speech raised gently into song, of eloquent silences pierced by shafts of pain.

The pianist, of course, is part of the conspiracy. And in every thrilling second of this performance, Johnson was Schreier's alter ego, tormented by the relentless rhythm of the wedding dance, refracting the light of Heine's summer morning to surround one song's simple melody, only to break with the heel-click of reality into the total isolation of the soul in dream. The second half of the evening seemed like an impromptu Schubertiad, with well-known yet shrewdly chosen songs of fugitive moods, of breath minutely threaded through words into melody. The ever-sharp blade of Schreier's tenor honed itself against every racing note of *Rastlose Liebe*, only to find total stillness in the perfectly controlled single soul-breath of Goethe's *Wanderers Nachtlied*.

HILARY FINCH

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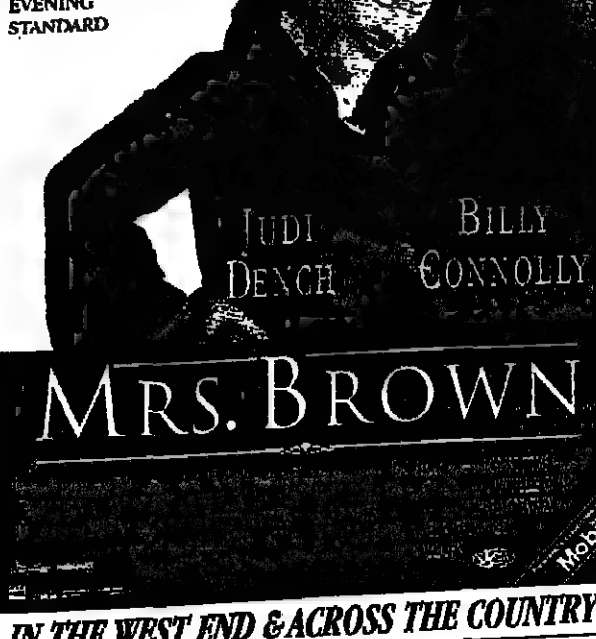
THE SUNDAY TIMES

"Judi Dench is already backed to win an Oscar. SEE IT"

Steve Grant, TIME OUT

"A comedy that's both DELICIOUS and DELICATE"

Alexander Walker, EVENING STANDARD



IN THE WEST END & ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Painting over the cracks

stage it? To quote Buster Keaton, "pass".

Neither Penelope Walsley-Clark (Norma) nor Anne Mason (Adalgisa) is blessed with a conventionally beautiful voice; both tired towards the end, and their tone grew increasingly strident. Walsley-Clark has a commanding presence and a strong profile; she went through the motions efficiently, without quite achieving the heroic scale for the big scenery-chewing moments. Mason really believed in what she was doing, and acted from the heart.

Here, at least, were two good singers doing as best they could, and

OPERA

Norma

Glasgow

that was infinitely preferable to the Polione (Daniel Muñoz) and Orovoso (Danilo Rigosa), who bowed at a steady forisismo in the worst tradition of the Italian provinces, and gestured accordingly in a depressing demonstration of the art of coarse operatic performance.

This was in sad contrast to the signals emanating from the pit,

where that experienced Bellini conductor Julian Smith led a consistently absorbing musical performance, conjuring a real sense of drama out of the home-spun melodies. Not even the simplest accompaniment figure escaped his attention: everything was carefully, lovingly shaded, especially the sustained notes under pizzicatos or arpeggios. The orchestra responded with a will, and the chorus almost too lustily; Smith certainly found the violence in a score we think of as all moonlight and mistletoe.

The same is true of Ian Judge's crisply organised production, in decor by John Gunter and Deirdre

Clancy full of strong colours. The sets regrouped into new locations more often than strictly necessary: why should Polione be in such a hurry to leave his well-appointed study, complete with Julius Caesar in relief? Because he should, of course, be lurking in the Druids' temple at that point. It was either that or the curious alienating device of having stagehands periodically march on to shift the furniture around.

The main thing is, the audience was gripped by the work, by the tunes, by the scene when Norma decides not to kill her children (which can't fail), and by her public confession of guilt. So in the end Buster Keaton's "pass" won't quite do. The answer has to be, sort of, "yes".

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THIS can lay claim to being the purest of *bel canto* operas, one reason why many singers avoid it. The vocal line is cruelly exposed for long stretches. And opera houses are wary of the wafer-thin plot concerning the habit of the heroine, Amina, of sleepwalking over dangerous rooftops and rickety bridges. So all credit to Naxos for this concert performance with the Slovakian soprano, Luba Orgonasova, giving a star display as Amina.

She begins cautiously and her opening declaration of joy could do with more verve. But she grows rapidly with the opera, and full vocal fireworks are delivered in best Bellini style. Raúl Gimenez turns in one of his most graceful characterisations as Elvino, and he too displays plenty of musical flourish as he doubts Amina's fidelity. When things are going better he and Orgonasova weave their voices around each other with the most delicate thread.

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JUST what Shostakovich meant by the phrase "a Soviet artist's creative reply to just criticism", in relation to his Fifth Symphony, we cannot be sure. But it is certain that the work cannot be understood without reference to ironic undercurrents.

Mariss Jansons begins his account with such silky, smooth string playing from

the Vienna Philharmonic that one wonders at first whether it is all too sleek. But then, as the tempo increases at the entry of the piano, a sinister element creeps in with the rasping horns, and things appear in a different light.

The second movement has just the right sense of insouciance, of a rebellious spirit cloaked in open-air bonhomie. The finale sets off at a cracking pace, but concludes with as brutally forced a sense of "jubilation" as one could wish to hear.

The coupling is the Chamber Symphony Op 110a, Rudolf Barshai's orchestral arrangement of the dark-hued Eighth String Quartet.

VOCAL

Hilary Finch

SCHUBERT

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Skovhus/Deutsch
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THE Danish baritone Bo Skovhus has conscientiously done his homework, as every singer of *Die schöne Müllerin* must do as the market becomes ever more flooded with recordings. His scrutiny of sources, including Schubert's autograph manuscript, seems to have made him particularly sensitive to the shifting qualities of movement both within and between songs.

As the tale of the lovelorn miller's apprentice opens, a brisk and buoyant jogging movement is set up in Skovhus's well-toned baritone, modulating to a gentle, rippling flow of breath and articulation in the second song. Skovhus's own meticulously observed rhythmic details are unified by the pianist Helmut Deutsch, a wise veteran of this cycle.

A quick, impulsive move from the cycle's temporary resting-place in the song *Pause*—as the protagonist takes the green ribbon from his lure to give to his beloved, only to receive the bitter irony of his gesture in the spat-out words of *Der Jäger*—exemplifies one of the many ways Skovhus has made this cycle very much his own, and a valuable contribution to the catalogue.

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THE TIMES
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TOKEN 9

Real girl power: Peter Ackroyd on three biographies that trace Jane Austen's journey from spinster to literary celebrity

She was sick and wicked

When a woman of Jane Austen's acquaintance was delivered of a dead child, the novelist brightly remarked that the stillbirth was probably the result of shock when the wife happened "by chance to look at her husband". It is a joke in the worst possible taste, and hardly reflects the "gentle Jane" of literary stereotype, but it has the merit of being entirely characteristic. There is her famous remark, on hearing of an English defeat in Portugal: "How horrible it is to have so many people killed! And what a blessing that one cares for none of them."

Of course the varnish has been scraped off the portrait of this particular "literary maiden aunt" on previous occasions, but these three new biographies help to complete the restoration. Of course it is always irritating when a biographer finds that his or her subject has been adopted by another writer, but the volumes under review have the virtue of being quite distinct.

The impressions of Austen's character, for example, are analogous without being identical. Myer depicts Austen as a kind of outsider, "tougher, more irritable and more sardonic" than is usually considered; Nokes has discovered within her writing "a restless, reckless undercurrent of frustration," while Tomalin, in turn, diagnoses the problems attendant upon "the dryness and coldness about her heart". The last seems most convincing. As Austen remarked of one of her own characters, she had "no more heart than a stone to lead in general".

People in particular were of

JANE AUSTEN
A Life

By Claire Tomalin
Viking, £30
ISBN 0 070 86528 1

JANE AUSTEN
By David Nokes

Fourth Estate, £20
ISBN 1 85702 419 2

JANE AUSTEN
A Biography

By Valerie Grosvenor Myer
Michael O'Mara Books, £18.99
ISBN 1 85479 213 X

course quite another matter, and the domestic interiors contained within these biographies are all ways interesting. The facts are familiar enough. After some brief forays into female education, she never strayed beyond the enclosure of her family circle. All her life she remained a spinster, dependent upon the kindness of her siblings; but if her life of genteel poverty remained a constant source of vexation, her social insignificance helped to fuel her perceptions as well as her resentment. To some she seemed "dowdy", even "prim", but she was spirited enough when it suited her. One contemporary described her as a "butterfly". But she was not a butterfly at all. She was a hawk. "Pictures of perfection," she once wrote, "make me sick and wicked."

Her brother wrote that hers was "not by any means a life of event", but nothing sensational necessarily needs to occur to any writer. She only had to look into herself to find all the horrors and ambitions of the great world. There is often the

hunt for some "problem" which might explain her, when in fact the beauty of her writing suggests that there was no real problem at all. The fault lay in others, and it seems likely that she suffered all her life from being underestimated; she rarely had the confidence to challenge those who took her for granted, and instead indulged her sick or wicked thoughts within her letters to her sister.

The publication of *Sense and Sensibility*, when she had reached what seemed to her to be the dim and dreary age of 36, changed all that. This novel was followed by *Pride and Prejudice*, which had in fact been composed some 15 years before, and all at once the spinster

became a literary celebrity. She was perhaps gratified by her success in more than one respect: she described each novel as her "darling child". But, in characteristic 18th-century fashion, she also decided to put her offspring to work. "I shall try to make all the money... I can of it," she wrote.

With the subsequent publication of *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* her originality and wit were widely remarked, although the periodicals were happy to emphasise that her writing was "inoffensive" and "harmless". Many of her admirers urged her to attempt something heroic or historical, but she knew that her apparent limitations were not limitations at all. Hence her

famous remark about working upon two inches of ivory.

Ivory, however, is very tough. That is why Tomalin's fine phrase, "economic romance", is an appropriate description for all of Austen's fiction. Her novels are as concerned with money, and the power of money, as those of Balzac: both writers were conveying the vagaries of an unsettled society in which value lay only in capital and credit. Hers was by no means the soft or comfortable world to be found in film and television adaptations. It was an anxious civilisation moved by "debt and scandal" (among other subjects. Austen touches upon sodomy and incest) while at the same time fuelled by avarice

and hypocrisy. It was a society in which the unsuccessful simply disappeared from sight.

Her own family were not immune from such pressures, and these biographies all suggest that they could be as greedy as any of their contemporaries. It may be that Austen, as her parents' seventh child, had the advantage of being able to observe her elders behaving in less than an impeccable manner. Certainly she saw through all the conventions by which the Austens and others were supposed to live. She had a clear eye which she turned upon herself as deliberately as she trained it upon others. She once described herself as a "wild Beast" but, in fact, she was only a

human being stripped bare of all pretences.

Of the three works under review, that of Valerie Grosvenor Myer is the least satisfying. Nokes is good on Jane Austen's relationship with others, Tomalin on Austen's relationship with herself. Nokes is copious, Tomalin is more controlled. Nokes has written his life from the perspective of the family, standing by and watching their reactions; Tomalin is more dispassionate and combative. This reviewer would award the palm to Tomalin, although Nokes is never very far behind. But why speak of competition, when Austen herself found all the ways of the world highly comical?



Unable to do the locomotion

Russell Celyn Jones finds Amis going off the rails in his attempt at an American-style thriller

The sound an English writer makes when composing crime fiction is of a white man singing the blues. Crime fiction is endemic to America as opera is to Italy. At their best, American crime writers not only have a way of getting down in the dirt with their characters, but address state of the nation issues as well. The English crime novel, specifically the detective genre, seems too recreational, too middle-class, too nice.

Martin Amis was never going to write one of those. An honorary American crooner, he goes all the way with *Night Train*, a police procedural, and sets it in the States. Well, sort of. Amis has never had a fictional topography of his own. Instead, he has a study—from where he invents the low-life London described in *Money* and *London Fields* and the American city in *Night Train* that exists somewhere between New Jersey and Illinois, at a guess. Even

NIGHT TRAIN

By Martin Amis

Cape, £12.99
ISBN 0 224 05018 4

his characters, as their names suggest (Paulie No, Overmars, HJ Fulkingham) are satirical abstractions that divulge no real geography. As a sort of double bluff he lends a parochial, subliminal edge to the voice, as though Mike Hoolihan, homicide detective and our narrator, has never strayed beyond her state. "What you do is you take the M1E around CSU skirting Lawnwoods"—as if we would know.

Mike Hoolihan is a woman who talks like a guy. Who talks like Amis in fact, with the same comic brío, multiple registers, ruff phrasing, even the Bellowesque tautologies of which this author is so fond. "Everyone is quietly aware

that Homicide is the daddy, Homicide is the Show." A case solved: "It's closed. It's made. It's down." Hoolihan is also a classic Amis paradox: a homicide detective investigating a suicide. The suicide victim, Jennifer, is the daughter of Mike's boss in the police, and had it all—brains, beauty, body. Her father suspects murder but can't find the evidence, despite the three bullets lodged in her skull.

Each lead sends Hoolihan—ex-alcoholic, a failure in love—into a cold-dead-of-remorse. Why should it be Jennifer and not Hoolihan to check out early? Jennifer was an astrophysicist who lived with unanswered questions and all Hoolihan can come up with is that she had become frightened of "losing control of her thoughts". Thoughts pertaining to the isolation of our galactic situation. The nuclear holocaust paranoia of *London Fields*, "the ultimate homicide", has here been displaced by the disharmony of the spheres—"the universe is the case".

Quite a heavy load for a 160-page police procedural. Indeed, there is something about Amis's voice that seems at odds with this genre. His mini-essays on the Big Bang and self-slaughter make for



Amis: following in Bellow's footsteps

uncomfortable cerebral activity in Hoolihan, whose meditations they are meant to be. Amis writes from too far above his characters—ordinary persons mysteriously endowed with extraordinary linguistic gifts. Consequently, Amis can tell us what love or grief is, but he can't show us. From the first few pages you sense the culture rejecting the specimen. And Amis, the cool sentence architect, can't always get those sentences to work internally. "Denziger looked as though mathematics were happening to him right there and then... he looked subtracted." "His head vibrated, his head actually trembled to terrible imaginings."

Night Train has its antecedents in Saul Bellow, Elmore Leonard, the colloquialisms of a Southern writer, Barry Hannah (*Airships*; Ray), the movies (*Farago*) and television. Hoolihan wags her finger so many times at the haunted fish-tank in the corner of the living room as the prime source of behaviour that an Amis theme starts to emerge: imitation is the culture. Even detectives are at it, an observation Bellow made 20 years earlier in *Humboldt's Gift*: "Even the cops have seen *The Godfather*, *The French Connection*, *The Valachi Papers* and other blast-and-bang thrillers." By the time Hoolihan concludes "I believe that copycat is as old as Homer", you sense Amis rationalising his own impersonations.

"Transdiscursive", Foucault called this. "One can be the author of a theory, tradition or discipline in which other books and authors will in turn find a place." Artists in one generation emulate greater artists in another and that's all right. Amis has built his career out of 20th-century American voices, principally Bellow's, and that's all right too. But Bellow is inimitable as an archivist of the human condition: as readers we construct our characters from his fictional blueprints. Amis is just not in that league. *Night Train* is a slick fast ride, but it lacks soul.

Escape from others' voices

SINCE a selection of one poet's work—here, Anthony Thwaite's *Selected Poems, 1956-1996* (Enitharmon Press, £8.95, ISBN 1 900564 55 6)—consists by definition mostly of work with which the poet's readers will be familiar, it is pleasant to be able to offer the opinion that the ten previously uncollected poems are as good as any Thwaite has written. Their tone is elegiac, though laced with wit and avoiding solemnity: "Changing my tie in the lavatory/ From black to flowery/ In the train from the funeral/ Travelling south to the wedding..."

With such straight lines Anthony Thwaite bids fair to become at last his own man in contemporary terms, and a poet whom no amount of aspirin will dissolve.

For Anthony Thwaite is a poet who gives at first the impression that he would go away if you took an aspirin. Always intelligent and technically accomplished, his work seems an amalgam of all the most fashionable modern influences. But there are better things to be found in his *Selected Poems 1956-1996*, when he escapes his origins in other poets.

Most of these come when he writes about the

geography and history of places where he has lived abroad. Thwaite's senses are quickened by acquaintance with foreign parts, with a welcome diminishment of that irony which is his usual mode.

Not that it is the exotic which appeals to him. Broken bones and dust, the rubble that men leave behind them, such detritus forms the subject-matter of *The Letters of Synesius*, written in the voice of a Libyan bishop of the 5th century. The sharpest lines have real colloquial force: "To call a man a dog is an insult in many languages, but not to dogs."

Monologue in the Valley of the Kings, getting under the skin of an Egyptian seeking to make sense of the pharaohs' cult of death, is similarly powerful. So are the poems extracted here from Thwaite's *Victorian Voices* (1980). It is as if this poet needs a mask in order to speak out with anything like a voice of his own. Elsewhere, the best he achieves is something undeniably honest but too derivative of Larkin to do justice to its own experience.

ROBERT NYE

Without advice from a good woman

John Grigg

MUSSOLINI AND THE BRITISH

By Richard Lamb

John Murray, £25
ISBN 0 7195 5892 2

surprisingly, since she was Jewish—anti-Nazi. She was also pro-British and pro-French. Significantly, her influence was on the wane during the Abyssinian crisis in 1935, and not long afterwards Mussolini turned to serious persecution of the Jews in Italy, though he had earlier



Neville Chamberlain with Mussolini in 1938

described Hitler's racial theories as "arrant nonsense".

Sarfaty's hold over him ended because, Lamb tells us, she "lost her sexual attraction" for the Duce. It is rather hard to see what British diplomacy could have done about that. But was it a mistake for Britain to oppose Mussolini's Abyssinian venture? Lamb argues that it was the wrong policy, even if it had been effectively applied (as, of course, it was not). He thinks that otherwise Mussolini would have remained an ally against Hitler. But he later admits that the Duce "would doubtless have proved an unreliable and treacherous ally", which seems to call the whole argument into question.

THERE was also the problem of Mussolini's claims on France, in regard to Nice, Corsica and Tunisia. France was the ally who really mattered to Britain, and the

maintenance of peace depended, above all, on Franco-British solidarity. In any from that might be established against the threat of a resurgent Germany (such as the so-called Stresa Front, involving Italy, in April 1935), most of the effective strength had to be provided by Britain and France. Italy's importance, one way or the other, was strictly limited—its events were to prove.

Lamb rightly criticises Anthony Eden, who became Foreign Secretary at the end of 1935, for his defective sense of proportion as between Mussolini and Hitler. He dislikes the Duce almost to a "personal vendetta" (a foretaste of his later obsession with Nasser), while he took an altogether more relaxed view of Hitler, who was, however, by far the more dangerous man. Eden's attitude is well illustrated in a letter to Neville Chamberlain written as late as January 1938 in which he said: "There seems to be a certain difference between Italian and German positions in that an agreement with the latter might have a chance of a reasonable life, especially if Hitler's own position were engaged, whereas Mussolini is, I fear, a complete gangster."

Yet there were people with no such illusions who nevertheless felt that a proper stand should have been made against Mussolini over Abyssinia. Harold Macmillan reflected long afterwards that the Abyssinian issue offered the best chance of breaking the habit of appeasement, since it would have enlisted more popular support than any other (League of Nations idealists as well as Balance of Power realists). If there had been a successful show of strength over Abyssinia in 1935, Hitler might have been deterred from the remilitarisation of the Rhineland.

The vital need was for Britain and France to act together, and toughly, so dispelling the impression that they could easily be defied. In the absence of such joint resolve, any courting of Mussolini was likely to do more harm than good.

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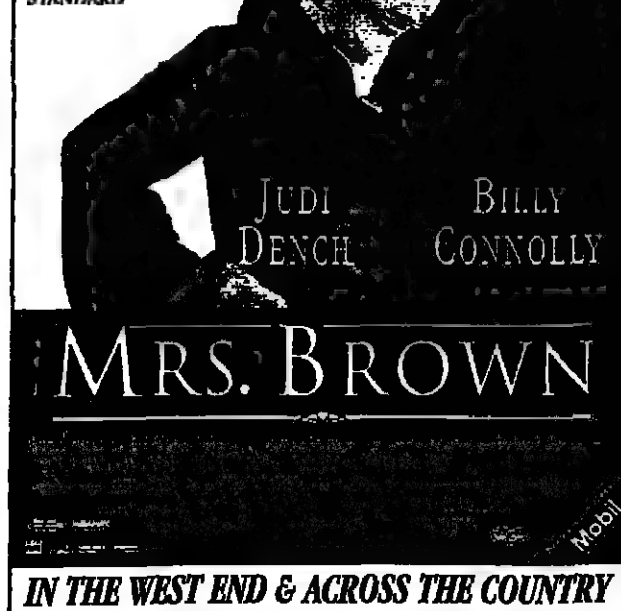
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IN THE WEST END & ACROSS THE COUNTRY

A not-so-heavenly choir

Look back at the past by all means: but denigrating Britain's achievements is no way to face the future, says **Kenneth Baker**

A group of left-wing historians want to knock Margaret Thatcher off the pedestal which they believe has been so lovingly constructed and embellished by right-wing historians. The broad thrust of the essays in this rag-bag, *From Blitz to Blair*, is that Thatcherism fostered greed, individualism, created an underclass, destroyed British manufacturing industry, split the North from the South and fostered the position of Euroscepticism. By spending too much on nuclear weapons, these works contend, Margaret Thatcher postured pretentiously on the world stage. But this book will not become a seminal text of the counter-revolution.

The best essay is on Attlee, for he needs no Socialist apologists, unlike Wilson and Callaghan. The essay on the Thatcher years, by Professor Hirst of Birkbeck College, is superficial and slipshod. He does not even mention the privatisation of BT, which was the template for the rest. Unprivatised, BT would not today be the third largest telecommunications company in the world. It would have remained snugly torpid in the public sector, like France Telecom. He then says that Mrs Thatcher was "lucky" to win the Falklands War, "Lucky", Professor Hirst? What about those qualities which seem to be unfamiliar to you — of character and willpower?

The difficulty for the Labour revisionists is that they have to show that Thatcherism was not needed because the 1970s were not a nasty damaging decade. They have to overlook the fact that union power brought down two Prime Ministers, and the editor of this polemic, Mr

Tiratsoo, even argues that the winter of discontent was due as much to bad British management as to the trade unions.

It is fortunate for new Labour, and for the country, that Tony Blair has rejected such drivel. He is building on Thatcherism, not pulling it down. He knows that privatisation works — rail consumer groups are already saying that services are better: he is not going to increase taxes on the middle classes, or scrap the union reforms and he has accepted the education reforms — national curriculum, tests, league tables, grant-maintained schools, student loans, and capped them with student fees. It must be very gallant for the new revisionists to see that Tony Blair's abandonment of socialism was Mrs Thatcher's ultimate victory.

Roy Hattersley's *Prejudiced History* of the same period is a much more interesting, thorough and entertaining analysis. In 1992 he gave up active politics to make a lot of money by writing; there's nothing wrong in that, as Dr Johnson observed: only a blockhead would write for anything but money. He has revived the art of the political essay which expired in the 1930s; and every editor knows that Hatters

FIFTY YEARS ON
A Prejudiced History of Britain Since the War

By Roy Hattersley
Little, Brown, £20
ISBN 0 316 87932 0

FROM BLITZ TO BLAIR
A New History of Britain Since 1939

Edited by Nick Tiratsoo
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20
ISBN 0 297 81856 2



Hattersley: older values

is good for 800 words on anything by 4pm.

This is a substantial book and it certainly isn't an apology for the failure of Labour governments. He distributes the blame between the parties though, not surprisingly, credits Labour with more decent principles. Hattersley's theme is that Britain, deluded by Empire, the special relationship with America, and "the uncertainty of the island race", did not sink itself into Europe. The biggest mistake was made by Clement Attlee in 1950 when he refused to join the European Coal and Steel Community, the forerunner of the European Union. His villains are therefore de Gaulle, Michael Foot and Margaret Thatcher; his heroes, Ted Heath, Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey. He has an arch swipe at the damascene

conversion of Neil Kinnock, who turned from a left-wing rebel to a European Commissioner, pro-competition and nuclear deterrence.

Hattersley is an unabashed federalist: for him the United States of Europe is the only way forward. He has been consistent in this view, although as a Labour MP he fought the 1983 election on a manifesto commitment to withdraw from the Union.

We should be wary of such certainty. I remember Hattersley as a minister in Wilson's Government and in Callaghan's Cabinet personally advocating and implementing policies which at the time were supposed to solve all Britain's problems — prices and incomes policies, planning agreements, import and exchange controls, social contracts, a National Enterprise Board, and the nationalisation of shipbuilding, the ports and British Aerospace. So he writes from the vantage point of failure. Haven't competition, privatisation, monetarism and the market served the country better?

Hattersley's attitude to Blair is one of bemused admiration because "he has created a political party which is free from the taint of party politics". The jury is out as to

whether he can get away with this but Hattersley, in the meantime, is enjoying an Indian summer, preaching the old values of socialism, equality and taxing the rich to help the poor. The radical egalitarianism of old Labour can't stand listening to Hattersley on equality, for to them it's like hearing a choir singing in a three-star restaurant. But Tony Blair should learn one lesson from these two books: Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson, James Callaghan and John Major all came to grief over defending an unrealistic value of sterling. Floating defuses the crisis but Blair will have to ensure that the euro does not become his albatross.

The trouble with both of these books is that they have to claim that the recent history of Britain has been one of decline, despair and defeat. As we approach the millennium, that view should be challenged. Today Britain is the seventh most competitive country in the world — the strong man of Europe, with declining unemployment, rising output, inflation contained and union power curtailed. Eighty per cent of our young people go on to further and higher education, and this year has seen the best results ever in GCSE and A-level exams. We have the soundest financial system of any developed country for dealing with the huge problem of paying pensions to future generations. Over the past 50 years, Britain has enjoyed a renaissance in classical and popular culture which has produced some of the world's greatest writers, poets, sculptors, artists, musicians and film-makers. Denigration of our recent past is no way to face the future.

Pistols at the parsonage

Ian McIntyre

THE BRONTES
A Life in Letters
By Juliet Barker
Viking, £20
ISBN 0 670 87212 1

Another book about the Brontës by Juliet Barker? Didn't she write that whopping prize-winning biography just a few years ago? Isn't she the author of *The Brontë Yearbook*? Can there really be anything more? Well yes, as it happens, quite a lot, and the former curator of the Parsonage Museum at Haworth has devised an effective and highly readable way of presenting it.

George Eliot wished the characters in *Jane Eyre* "could talk a little less like the heroes and heroines of police reports". It is not something she could have said about the Brontës' sisters' letters. Juliet Barker says that when she was at work on her biography she was struck by their eloquence and immediacy. But that raised a problem familiar to anyone who has attempted a scholarly biography: "The discipline of the biographical form and the absolute necessity of the only appropriate quotation meant that, reluctantly and at times, belligerently, I felt obliged to omit passages of quiet, outstanding lyricism or humour or interest."

Hence this volume of letters. It is principally on Charlotte that the spotlight falls, because most of the letters are hers. Juliet Barker has also, however, drawn skillfully on Emily and Anne's diary papers to plug gaps in the correspondence.

I particularly liked Mrs Gaskell's alarming discovery, while visiting the parsonage, that when Mr Brontë dressed in the morning, his watch was not the only thing he popped into his pocket. "There was this little deadly pistol sitting down to breakfast with us, kneeling down to prayers at night — to say nothing of a loaded gun hanging up on high ready to pop off on the slightest emergency."

Several important letters have come to light since the publication of *The Brontës*. Barker is now able to demonstrate, for example, that previous biographies were wrong in suggesting that Branwell attended the Royal Academy. In some previous editions many letters have been carelessly transcribed or heavily edited. The fuller version of a letter Branwell wrote in October 1845, published here, refers to the wife of his employer, Mr Robinson as "one whom I

must, till death, call my wife," a phrase which Barker marshals in support of her view that the relationship was sexual. She also convincingly knocks on the head a recent feminist interpretation of a letter to Southey from Charlotte which argued that she was being sarcastic at the Poet Laureate's expense.

What I enjoyed most in this splendid book were Charlotte's sharply observed sketches of her contemporaries. Although she later falls in love with him, she is not initially impressed by Monsieur Heger, the director of her



Branwell's painting of his sisters

Brussels pension: "Sometimes she borrows the lineaments of an insane Tom-cat, sometimes those of a delirious Hyena." It was gratifying to learn that some of the love scenes in *Jane Eyre* had made the great Thackeray cry, but "Critics, it appears to me, do not know what an intellectual bo-constrictor he is."

Relatives come visiting from the South of England. "They reckon to be very grand folks indeed," she tells a friend. "To my eyes they seemed to be an attempt to play the great Mogul down in Yorkshire." Up in London, she hears Cardinal Wiseman speak. "He came swimming into the room smiling, simpering, and bowing like a fat old lady," she writes to her father. "He spoke in a smooth whining manner, just like a canting Methodist preacher."

Danger. You are entering an intellectual hard-hat area. Belligerent Yorkshire woman working overhead.

Tales traverse a continent

To anthologise sub-Saharan Africa under the problematic rubric of the modern — as the title of this eclectic selection of black African short stories demonstrates — necessarily involves massive acts of exclusion and a burden on the material to match up continually to its titular promise.

Charles Larson has long been at the centre of the critical debate about what exactly constitutes the modern in contemporary African writing and here he lays down the tables of his definition, based on certain complementary and contesting precepts to do with taste, with Europe in Africa and with the African oral tradition of storytelling.

Wole Soyinka's classic 1960 poem, *Telephone Conversation*, of black resignation colliding, sight unseen, against white hubris, prefaces the book. His fiction is, strangely, not included. In an essay from 1967 entitled *The Writer in a Modern African State*, Soyinka describes the then current state of the African writer as "a stage of disillusionment" after the ephemerence of the covenant between writer and nation — that all the writer's skills should, in the new post-colonial situation, be devoted to the promotion of a collective ideal — is betrayed by corruption, coups and civil wars.

With Charles Larson's 27 stories (six by women, including the enduring Bessie Head) drawn from 16 countries, writers now have a proven history of persecution to add to their professional betrayal. One contributor, the Nigerian, Ken Saro-Wiwa, whose acid satire brightens this sombre book, was hanged by the military regime for his politics in 1995. In his detailed notes on each author, Charles Larson includes the gruesome fact that Saro-Wiwa's hangman only succeeded in killing him on the fifth attempt. Saro-Wiwa's epistolary tale, *Africa Kills Her Sun*, written in 1989, is prophetic. The narrator is executed by the State.

Between Chinua Achebe's generation of writers and the newer generation headed by

wunderkind Ben Okri, African writing has become less didactic. This move from the outside to the inside still carries a charge to examine the state of the State but there is a return to the play of the earliest contributor, Amos Tutuola. A feature of Tutuola's opening story, *The Complete Gentleman*, is its devotion to African animist thought: the representation of abstractions in physical terms. Ben Okri continues this tradition, albeit in a socio-economic landscape of post-independence and post-civil war Nigeria. His story, set in Somalia, depicts a landscape and people devastated by famine and saved, ironically, by

Fred D'Aguiar

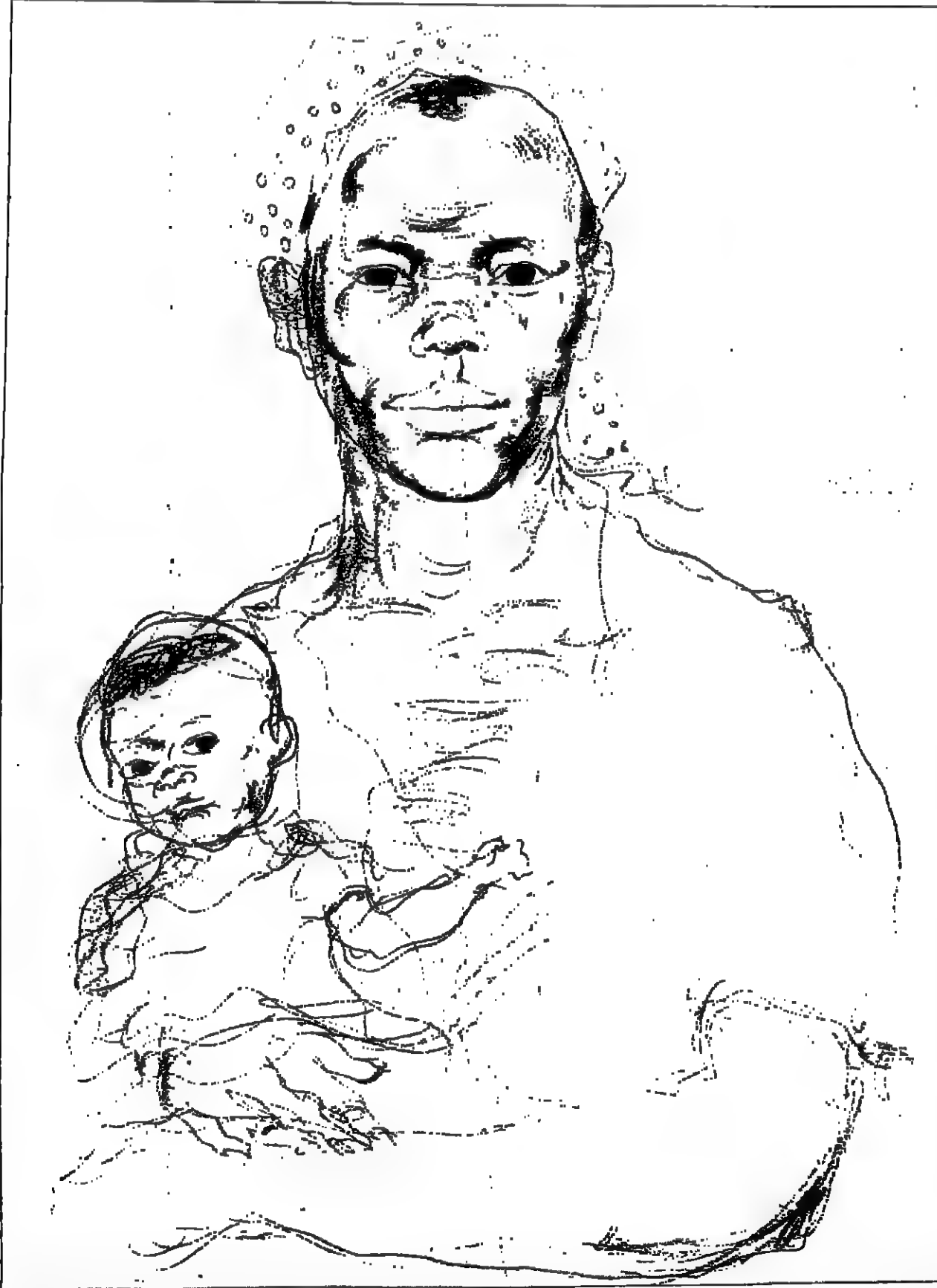
UNDER AFRICAN SKIES
Modern African Stories
Edited by Charles R. Larson
Payback Press, £14.99
ISBN 0 86341 715 5

the peace enforcers of the United States.

The stories from the Fifties and Sixties explore the colonial past and the colonial experience. They are well-crafted (Camara Laye of Guinea), if a little preachy (Birago Diop of Senegal), and still have a fresh feel. In the more recent fiction (Sindiwe Magona of South Africa and Veronique Tadjo of Ivory Coast) history and geography combine with ethnicity to address blacks globally.

I miss the haunting voice of the late Zimbabwean writer, Danbudo Marachera among the younger contributors, as well as his more senior countryman, Charles Mungoshi. Missing too are the eminent Ghanaians, Ayi Kwei Armah, Kofi Awoonor and Kofi Laing. Welcome though this handsome production is, in the pursuit of a tropical classical ideal, Charles Larson has been a little too stytic.

Fred D'Aguiar's latest novel, *Feeding the Ghosts*, is published by Chatto & Windus, priced £14.99.



Paul Hogarth's *Bemba Woman and Child*, Northern Rhodesia, 1956. Of his model Hogarth wrote: "Not everyone gazed at white men with such good humour in this part of Africa. I drew her seated outside her house, chatting to neighbours in the late afternoon sun." From his autobiography, *Drawing on Life* (David Charles, £30)

Comeuppance from Down Under in dickens of a book

"IT WAS a dismal January day in the year of 1818, and the yellow fog which had lain low all morning lifted a moment in the afternoon and then, as if the desolate pile of rock and stone thereby revealed was far too melancholy a sight to be endured, it descended again like a shroud around the walls of Newgate Prison."

So opens *Jack Maggs*, Jack Maggs, that is, by Tobias Oates, ambitious, nervous, absolutely magnetic young novelist who in 1837 is only just beginning to make his reputation. Tobias Oates, who has a flamboyant style, a taste for luxury, a father-in-law for whom he nurses an illicit passion; Tobias Oates, London's streets, who can write a novel in a lurching coach, whose childhood, coloured by sorrow and fear, makes him seek out poverty, despair and wretchedness and set down what he sees with his racing quill. He is a familiar — a

comforting — figure, this Tobias Oates.

"It was a Saturday night when the man with the red waistcoat arrived in London." So opens *Jack Maggs* by Peter Carey, the dazzling Australian novelist whose imagination is only matched by his unpredictability. From the ricketing saga of *Illywhacker* through the tormented romance of *Oscar and Lucinda* and, latterly, the complex and sometimes puzzling novels *The Tax Inspector* and *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, Carey has turned a sharp eye on worlds utterly invented by him, bringing his inner Antipodes to life before our eyes. In *Jack Maggs* he has attempted something new again: taking another's invented world — that of Charles Dickens — and turning it in his hand like a prism to cast a new kind of light.

For there is, of course, already one novel that introduces us to a convict returned at his own mortal peril from

Erica Wagner

JACK MAGGS
By Peter Carey
Faber, £15.99
ISBN 0 571 19088 X

New South Wales to meet the boy he has made into a gentleman. But in that novel the boy's benefactor remains, even to the end, a shadowy figure. Abel Magwitch threatens young Pip on the marshes; even as he brings his protégé away from the blacksmith's forge he casts a shadow over his life which is never burnt away, and the life which the convict made for himself, both before and after his conviction, remain too in that shadow.

Carey looks to the other side of the world, his side of the world, for the centre of his novel, as Jack Maggs writes — backwards and in invisible

ink — the story of his damaged life to his dissolute protégé Henry Phipps, who shares with Pip only a disgust at the source of his fortune. This laborious task, the difficulty of which might be taken as a comment on the struggle to bring this voice of early Australia into the open, is interwoven with the young Oates's encounters with "the huge and haunted engine of Jack Maggs": the novelist wrests his story from him by means of hypnotic magnetism, making fiction into fact.

Carey's prose, as ever, is burnished to a high shine. Sulphurous, smoky London, its streets clogged with horseshit and refuse, its river trailed with slime and sewage, crowds the reader as it crowds Jack Maggs, fled from the clean sun of New South Wales. And yet this is not pastiche: the distinction between Oates and Carey is clear, and the novel is filled with the small observations that make Carey's work so poignantly memorable. Tobias's sister-in-law,

her affection for him faltering, sees how, as he leans against the fireplace, "the mantel was too tall for him, and how he stretched to accommodate himself to its demands." It was a vision most profoundly discouraging, and one she wished to God she had not seen."

But closing the book I recalled hearing Carey read its opening chapter aloud at the Hay Festival last year. When he had finished, a member of the audience asked him why he had chosen to set his novel in 1837. Carey looked startled, slightly alarmed, and said quietly: "I'd rather not answer that question." It is a question that still hangs in my mind. Jack Maggs is a fine novel, more than just an entertainment, and yet it seems too dependent on the conceit that props it up. Without Dickens, could I have pictured Oates? Without Magwitch, Maggs? Carey is good enough to stand alone, and in the end I wished he had.

THE TIMES/DILLONS BOOKER FORUM

Your chance to meet the Booker authors

YOU ARE INVITED to an evening of readings and discussion with five of the shortlisted authors for this year's Booker Prize. This Times/Dillons forum will be held on Monday, October 13, chaired by Peter Stothard, the Editor of *The Times*, the forum is an opportunity to participate in the award. The six nominations are:

Quarantine, by Jim Crace (Viking, £16.99).
The Underground Man, by Mick Jackson (Picador, £15.99).
Grace Notes, by Bernard MacLaverty (Jonathan Cape, £14.99).
Europa, by Tim Parks (Secker & Warburg, £9.99).
The Essence of the Thing, by Madeleine St John (Fourth Estate, £9.99).
The God of Small Things, by Arundhati Roy (Flamingo, £15.99).

The forum will be held at Church House, Dean's Yard, Westminster London SW1P 3NZ, starting at 7.30pm. Tickets at £10 (concessions £7.50) include an audio cassette featuring four- to five-minute extracts from all of the books and information about the six authors. Subject to demand, the event will be interpreted by sign language.

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THE VILLA Principe Leopoldo, overlooking Lake Lugano in Switzerland, has a two-night programme "Lugano Evasion" from Monday to Friday until the end of the year at £203 per room per night for double occupancy. The offer, through Prima Hotels, includes one evening meal per person. Details: 0800 181535.

A £9 REDUCTION off any two-day ticket to Alton Towers is included in a special half-term offer through Goldenrail, on October 24, of two nights' accommodation at either the Nottingham or Derby Novotel. Cost is £99 per room (up to two adults and two children). Details: 0161 2385200.

THE FOUR-STAR Golden Valley Thistle Hotel in Cheltenham has a health and beauty break at £179 per person for two nights' half-board accommodation including massage, facial, manicure and make-up lesson. Details: 01242 232691.

THE SAVOY HOTEL, London, is reviving the heyday of the Big Band era with Saturday night dinner dances, featuring the Piccadilly Dance Orchestra with tunes from the Twenties, Thirties and Forties. Cost is £40 per person. Details: 0171-420 2608.

GUESTS staying on a three-night Classic Collection weekend package at Brown's Hotel in Mayfair, at a rate of £190 per room per night, get the Sunday night at half price until the end of the year. Details: 0171-493 6020.

BERLIN'S famous Hotel Abbot, part of the Kempinski Hotels Group, has a weekend experience package at £538 for two people for two nights, including limousine transfer, one dinner and a special gift on arrival. Details: 0800 865588.

SPECIAL festive breaks at five-star hotels and resorts worldwide are included in the Leading Hotels of the World Christmas and New Year brochure. Details: 0171-436 5028.

THE MERIDIEN HOTEL in Piccadilly, London, has launched an afternoon tea in its Terrace Gardens restaurant which features a glass sunroof. A traditional meal, including gourmet sandwiches and scones, costs £17.50 per person. Details: 0171-465 1642.

HILTON in the UK is offering special rates and free accommodation for partners travelling with conferences and delegates at weekends until the end of the year. The 24-hour weekend delegate rate will be 50 per cent less than the midweek rate. Details: 0645 314151.

THE ENNERDALE Country House Hotel, a restored Grade II listed building near Cleator in the Lake District, has a two-night break through Sunvil UK for £114 per person, based on double occupancy including a cruise, weather permitting, on Derwent Water. Details: 0181 2329788.

THE CHOICE Hotels group in Europe has just published its directory of more than 350 hotels, including 60 in the UK, operating under brand names such as Clarion Quality and Comfort Inns. The free guide includes location maps of the hotels and information on local attractions and landmarks. Details: 0800 444444.



A fruit seller in Hue, typical of the sights on view on two fortnight-long mountain bike tours of central Vietnam available from Symbiosis Expedition Planning in December. Priced from £1,245 a person, including B&B, quality bikes, support vehicle, maintenance service and local guides; flights extra. Details: 0171-924 5906.

FLIGHTS

PRICES in British Airways latest world offers include US destinations between £179 and £199: Dubai at £399; Cape Town £459; Singapore £397. Details: 0345 222111.

VIRGIN Atlantic's riposte is to shave £1 off BA's transatlantic prices. New York return costs from £178 with Los Angeles priced from £298. Details: 01293 747245.

AIR Tickets Direct has a £125 Stansted-Milan excursion flying with Air UK. Details: 0990 320321.

HALF-PRICE business-class fares to Sydney and Melbourne from London or Manchester are available with Austria's Lauda Air between November 1 and December 10. The Travelbug charges £1,685

return with stopovers allowed in Vienna and Kuala Lumpur. Details: 0161-740 8948.

RETURN Alitalia flights to Bangkok cost £383, with Johannesburg priced at £340 and Hong Kong at £426 through Lupus Travel. Details: 0171-306 3000.

TICKETS for Southwest can now be bought in the UK. The cut-price no-frills US airline serves 51 cities in 25 states coast to coast. Depending on the route a one-way ticket costs between £49 and £83. Details: 01293 596677.

GULF AIR has extended its special deals. Excursion fares to the Gulf start at £399 while full-fare passengers can take along a companion free of charge. Details: 0171-408 1717.

FERRIES

SWANSEA Cork Ferries has a special weekend return fare of £139, available until December 15. The price includes a crossing for a car and up to five adults on a Thursday and Friday, returning from Cork on or before the following Monday. Details: 01792 450116.

IRISH Ferries Holidays has departures in September and October from £169.50 per person, which will include three nights' B&B in Connemara and two in Dublin, as well as a ferry crossing from Pembroke to Dublin. The price is based on four people travelling. Details: 0990 170000.

SCANDINAVIAN Seaways is offering eight-night self-catering holidays in

Germany from £184 per person, leaving Harwich on September 22. The price is based on four travelling and includes ferry. Details: 0990 333111.

HOVERSPEED has begun a Liverpool to Dublin ferry service. Seats on Wednesdays. Prices are £115 for a car and two adults, and £38 for foot passengers — both five-day returns. Details: 0345 523523.

STENA Line is offering £50 discounts on selected self-catering ski holidays booked before October 18. Brochure prices start at £37 each for eight adults sharing an apartment in La Clusaz, France. The price includes ferry crossing for two cars. Details: 0990 747474.

HOLIDAYS

UMBRIAN apartments close to Lake Trasimeno are available at a 20 per cent saving until the end of September with Room Service. A week's self-catering including flights now costs from £195 a person; an apartment sleeping six costs £189 a week, flights extra. Details: 0171-036 0888.

TUNISIA for a fortnight's Airtrans holiday for £349 a person with half-board and a flight from Gatwick on Sunday is on offer from Co-op Travelcare. Details: 0341 500388.

FUERTEVENTURA for a fortnight's self-catering is available for £179 a person from Lunn Poly. Fly from Gatwick next Wednesday. Details from the company's Holiday Shops.

AUTUMN savings of up to £250 a person are on offer until the end of the year from Hayes & Jarvis, with a week in Cuba costing from £389 a person and a week's cruising in the Maldives from £689. Prices include return flights. Details: 0181-748 0088.

GRECIAN GEMS cruises sailing from Venice for a week from September 27 and October 18 are available from £449 a person from Sealiner Cruises. Price includes full board and flights from the UK. Details: 0171-234 0500.

BARBADOS for a fortnight for £549 a person with a flight from Gatwick on October 5 and room-only accommodation is on offer from Cosmos. Details: 0181-480 5799.

TURKEY at half-term is available from Tapestry Holidays with a week's self-catering at Turunc Bay, and a week's B&B at Olu Deniz both costing £349 a person, including flights from Gatwick or Manchester on October 19. Details: 0181-742 0055.

CAPE ESTEREL on the Côte d'Azur is among French holiday villages available at special rates at half-term from EuroVillages. A week from October 18 or 25 costs £315 for a party of five including return Dover-Calais crossing and studio accommodation. Details: 01606 734400.

THE TAJ MAHAL Jaipur and Delhi are included in a week-long Indian tour available from £549 a person between October 7 and November 25 from Kuoni. Price includes flights from Gatwick, half-board and sightseeing. Details: 01306 742000.

PLYMOUTH and the "Pilgrims" in its living museum are among the highlights offered by New England Vacations. Four nights in a 19th-century inn plus three in Boston cost from £649 a person including flights from Gatwick and car hire. Details: 01727 837100.

ISRAEL's first all-inclusive hotel, the Lagoon in Eilat, will be available from £429 for adults and £359 for children from October 26 with Destination Red Sea. Flights from Gatwick on Sundays. Details: 0181-440 9900.

SRI LANKA for a fortnight for £666 a person staying in the colonial Mount Lavinia hotel, the former Governor's residence overlooking the sea near Colombo, is available from November 4 to December 2 from Somak Holidays. Flights from Gatwick. Details: 0181-423 3000.

SINGLES' weeks in Cyprus from December 10 and January 24 next year are on offer from £331 a person from Argo Holidays. Price includes accommodation and dinner at Atlantica Hotel, Limassol, activities and flights from a choice of UK airports. Details: 0171-331 7070.

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Road to recovery follows familiar route for Allenby

Badger has its day before birdie quest

Pearn's hat-trick sinks Japan


Davies demands 1980 gold medal

Leading batsman charged

□ **Rugby league:** St Helens yesterday signed Brent Goldspink, 25, the Australian prop forward, on a free transfer from Oldham Bears. Andy Northey left Knowsley Road at the same time to return to rugby union. He has signed a two-year agreement with Northampton in a £50,000 transfer.


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CRICKET: WELSH COUNTY READY TO TAKE FINAL STEP ON ROAD TO HOME RULE

Glamorgan relish power play

By ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

GLAMORGAN have not won the county championship since the year that Prince Charles was invested as Prince of Wales. In 29 summers, the Wales has moved on apace, even if the championship has not, and it is symbolic that the county should begin the match that could bring the title back to Wales on the day that the county votes on devolution.

For Glamorgan, even the involvement is special. In 1970, the year after their championship season, they finished second. Since then, they have been no higher than eighth for 25 out of 26 seasons. Six times, more than any other

they have turned this concluding week into a private duel. Glamorgan must go to Taunton aiming for maximum points; anything less will open the way for Kent to take the title by beating Surrey at Canterbury.

As both teams have won seven games, it is conceivable that the title could be shared for the first time in 30 years. In 1977, Kent were involved again, finishing tied with Middlesex after a titanic final round. The next year, they took the championship outright, for the sixth and most recent time.

Alan Ealham, the 1978 captain, will be at Canterbury today, not only to support his son, Mark, but in the hope that the modern Kent team will not enhance their reputation for failing to finish what they have started. Already they have flopped in the final of the Benson and Hedges Cup and lost the Axa Life League on its last day. To miss out on the championship as well would be difficult to bear. Kent are opposed today by a team with a tendency to play fatalistic cricket when their chance of honours has gone. It will be a decimated team, too, stripped by injury of Adam Hogg, Martin Bicknell and Chris Lewis, though as Kent have to resolve doubts over their own new-ball pair, that may only even things up.

Dean Headley will not play, the hip condition that continues to trouble him having ended prematurely a season of mixed promise and anxiety. Martin McCague, although less than 100 per cent fit, is likely to return.

It is in the overseas player area that Glamorgan have the advantage. Waqar Younis is fit and fully motivated for the game against Somerset, but Kent must get by without Paul Strang, who is back in Zimbabwe preparing for a Test match against New Zealand. Kent, indeed, will probably do without spin altogether, which may give some clue as to the texture of the Canterbury pitch.

Glamorgan will need to bat at their best to secure maximum bonus points, so Steve James's duel with Andy Caddick will be central, far more than one reason. James, already named as the Professional Cricketers' Association player of the year, is in a three-way race with Mark Ramprakash and Graham Thorpe for the Whyte & Mackay batting award, while Caddick heads the table for the bowling prize.



James will be hoping to rekindle his imperious form for Glamorgan at Taunton

James brought a staggering record into the championship run-in. Before the match at Taunton, he had scored 102, 69, 130, 103 and 113. Since then, he has managed 14, 21, 16, 28, 2 and 4. He is too good a player for such a slump to continue and his form will be crucial today.

In 1969, Glamorgan won the title through the dependability of that masterful slow bowler, Don Shepherd, and their left-handed opener, Alan Jones. Robert Croft is still aspiring to the heights of Shepherd, his mentor, and James could be a latter-day Jones. This, without question, is the strongest Glamorgan side for three decades, probably the strongest in the championship this summer. If they hold their nerve and are blessed by the weather, they can gain due reward.

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TABLE

	P	W	L	D	B	Pts
Glamorgan (10)	16	7	2	7	53	235
Kent (4)	16	7	4	5	43	221
Warwickshire (8)	16	6	2	8	38	215
Middlesex (9)	16	7	4	5	30	209
Worcestershire (10)	16	6	4	6	32	197
Surrey (13)	16	6	6	4	29	188
Essex (14)	16	6	6	4	27	185
Leicestershire (15)	16	5	6	5	23	178
Somerset (11)	16	3	2	11	26	177
Leeds (11)	16	3	1	12	36	170
Northants (11)	16	4	3	9	22	166
Hampshire (14)	16	4	4	8	39	151
Nottingham (16)	16	3	5	6	30	147
Durham (18)	16	2	7	7	22	137
Gloucestershire (12)	16	3	6	7	35	137
Sussex (12)	16	1	10	5	21	55

Includes eight points as sole batting last in match where scores finished level

(Last year's positions in brackets)

REMAINING FIXTURES: Today: Kent v Surrey, Somerset v Glamorgan

county in the same period, they have finished bottom of the table.

Having come so far, however, Matthew Maynard's side are not inclined to settle for a gallant near-miss. Given equitable fortune with the weather, which has cost them more than one likely victory, they would surely be entering the final round with a commanding lead. Instead, they have a single point to spare over Kent, with whom they have traded the high ground all season.

There has never been more than a few points between them and, having finally shaking off the valiant pretence of Gloucestershire and a late charge from Yorkshire,

Russell nears milestone

JACK RUSSELL needs one dismissal in Gloucestershire's final match of the season to become the 23rd wicketkeeper to reach 1,000 in first-class cricket. His striking-rate of 2.72 victims per match makes him the highest on that list (Bill Frindall writes).

Of Russell's 999 dismissals to date, two were held in the field, at fine-leg and mid-wicket, against a Minor Association XI on England's 1991-92 tour of New Zealand.

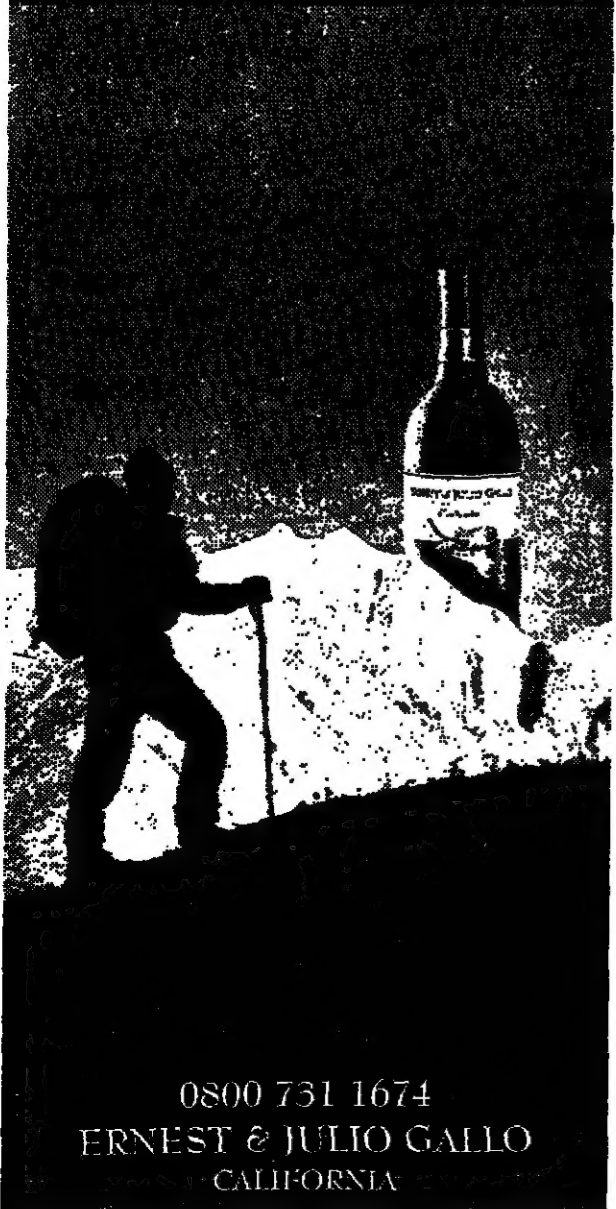
The England and Wales Cricket Board has appointed Simon Pack, 53, a former Nato commander for the western Mediterranean, as its international teams director. The new post carries responsibility for the overall administration of the England, England 'A' and England Under-19 teams.

LEADING WICKETKEEPERS

	Career	Dismissals	Total	CI	SI	Per match
R C Russell	1961-	356	999	991	108	2.72
F H Heath	1895-1914	497	1,510	933	577	2.62
A P E Knox	1924-25	511	1,244	1,211	133	2.63
R W Taylor	1960-88	639	1,649	1,473	176	2.50

Zinfandel?

I think it's a mountain in the Alps?



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Bennett prepares the way for Gatting's succession

IT IS not only distinguished and journeyman cricketers who are taking their leave of the game this week. Jack Bond and Barrie Meyer officiate for the last time in a fixture involving their former counties, Lancashire and Gloucestershire, and Don Bennett, the longest-serving coach in the country, is also retiring. His county, Middlesex, are seeking an Australian to replace him — but only for a season.

John Buchanan, the coach of Queensland, has been approached. The idea is that Mike Gatting will succeed him. "I will be very disappointed if [the Gatting] does not do the job after he has played on for one more season," Bennett said, "and I think in the long term Mike will be appointed by England. Since I started coaching the first team in 1969, he has been the player who has stood out. I rate him as a captain as highly as Mike Brearley."

Bennett, who is 63, has been with Middlesex since 1950, when Wisden recorded that "Timus (17) and Bennett (16) showed skill for their ages". He also played football for Arsenal and Coventry City.

In Bennett's playing days as a medium-pace bowler, Middlesex won nothing. Since he became coach, they have acquired 14 trophies. No wonder the committee is honouring him with a dinner in November.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed it, but two things concern me in particular," he said. "Players are moving around for ridiculous money and the

practice facilities on county grounds are worse now than they were when Sir Donald Bradman emphasised how important this was in 1948. Lord's is the only place where there is more than one net per team and at a time when we are talking about being professional, that is ridiculous," Bennett said.

Wes Hall, Charlie Griffith and Michael Holding, who once turned down a vast sum to play in South Africa, will be joining Sir Garfield Sobers in meeting dignitaries and taking part in a forum. "Conrad Hunte, my old colleague, who helps with the development of the game in the townships, feels there is a great deal of latent talent there," Sir Garfield said.

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The Don showed the letter to his wife who said, simply: "He's right. Shave it off." And Bradman did.

The townships of South Africa are in need of visits and coaching from the great and the good if, as is hoped, a new generation of fast bowlers is to emerge. Next year, when West Indies undertake their inaugural, historic tour, three of their finest exponents of the art will be there.

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Alternative antique and doggy derring-do

Francine Stock has returned with what we thought was *The Antiques Show* (BBC1) but which *The Radio Times* describes as "Top Gear on antiques". I must have been watching a different programme last night, because somewhere out there exists a copy with the real commentary that Stock recorded as she wandered around The Grosvenor House Antiques Fair chatting to Shakti Caine and Sally Burton (but not Jeremy Clarkson). You know the one I mean, the Stock commentary which tells us: "Look at this Louis XVI fauteuil and before you write out a cheque for £5,000 ask yourself: will it impress your girlfriend the next time you go to her for coffee? Now, this Georgian writing table, that's what you call a nice antique. Owning this slab of prime pre-Greenpeace mahogany would be even more fun than tossing TV sets off the top of a skyscraper."

Then David Dickinson, the dealer who addresses us as if we're a remedial class, turned up with his weekly *Buyers' Guide* - this week's being on period baths. "If this bath - which has a few little chips on the enamel, the size of a sixpence, and rather cumbersome plumbing back here which would need to be overhauled if you didn't want blockages in your waste trap - now, if this bath were a person," Dickinson was probably saying on the missing commentary, "it would be your Great Auntie Hilda before she'd had her facial mounds before she'd had her colostomy bag installed."

Madeline Marsh then took us to the National Classic Caravans Rally, where people who spend their weekends restoring 1920s, 1930s and 1940s caravans instead of leading normal lives, gather to admire each other's so-called "working antiques" - although until an antique has its own tax

lawyer it's probably not working hard enough, if you ask me. So what was Madeline saying on the phantom *Antiques Show* voiceover that had gone missing? Probably: "These caravans came with everything except an indoor loo. Accessories ranged all the way from crockery and cutlery designed specifically for each trailer, all the way to paper bags with holes cut out for the eyes so that embarrassed owners could drive them without being recognised by anyone they might know."

REVIEW



Joe Joseph

Just as *I Love Lucy*, *MASH* and, most recently, *Cheers* spawned so many episodes over the years that a cheapie media mogul could probably run a 24-hour cable television channel showing nothing but *I Love Lucy* reruns or *MASH* or *Cheers* repeats, there will soon be enough animal and vet-related programmes (from *Animal Hospital*

aren't-dogs-just-great?" programmes that could be repeated showings on a new cable Animal Channel - except maybe in Korea, where it might be better suited to the Food Channel. The programme had its moments even for those of us who have little interest in how much that doggy in the window is, unless someone happens to be offering a substantial prize for guessing correctly. The programme's message was essentially that dogs are the unsung heroes of war. We saw little poodles running across minefields ferrying messages; we saw them being parachuted on raids behind enemy lines; and we saw them being trained to sniff out explosives in Northern Ireland. Never underestimate a dog's nose. "Dogs see the world in odour pictures," said the narrator, Ian McShane, "with a sense of smell a thousand times greater than our own." When you think how much time

they spend smelling each other's bottoms, it's a wonder they can still walk straight, let alone run errands behind enemy lines like a canine Milk Tray Man.

There were many moving testimonies from owners who insisted that their doggy had saved their lives. Paratrooper Bill Rutter recalled how, in the Ardennes in 1944, he was walking in the woods during a lull in the fighting when his search dog Rex darted off into the undergrowth and leapt on a German sniper who was about to shoot. "If he hadn't caught them," Bill told us, "I wouldn't be here. I should have been lying with a lot of my mates out there."

Then there was John Flannely, who was on patrol in Vietnam with his search dog Bruiser, when their patrol was ambushed. John was badly wounded, unable to move. But Bruiser wouldn't leave. He

dragged John by the shoulder to an old bomb crater which afforded shelter. "I love him. I miss him. I'll never forget him," wept Flannely. "Under the stresses of war," said McShane, "man's best friend has revealed intelligence and senses so powerful, we can't fully explain them. They have instincts we don't understand. It's a mystery."

But not as big a mystery as the recommissioning of Chalk, the classroom sitcom which returned to BBC1 last night with suspiciously little fanfare. The plot pivoted on whether or not a new student teacher was a guinea-pig. Listen to the student teacher, offering Galafist High's deputy headmaster, played by David Bamber, a biscuit from an unseen tin. "Would you like a chocolate finger?" Oh, chocolate! Even Reg Varney would win to be associated with a line like that. But that's how we know that *Chalk*, too, is a mystery: because the show's such a dog.

- BBC1**
- 6.00am Business Breakfast (26789)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (1) (9997031)
9.05 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (1) (2892128)
9.30 Style Challenge Two former heart transplant patients receive a makeover (1630128)
9.55 Killy (1) (589789)
10.35 Change That From Cardiff (1762215)
11.00 News (1) and weather (4034583)
11.05 The Really Useful Show Consumer Issues (1) (5074322)
11.35 Room for Improvement Artificially ageing furniture, the efficiency of self-assembly instructions (2645302)
12.00 News (1) and weather (504505)
12.05pm Call My Bluff (982296)
12.35 Going for a Song (9795857)
1.00 News (1) and weather (42434)
1.30 Regional News (1762383)
1.40 The Weather Show (8754256)
1.45 Neighbours (1) (7732876)
2.10 Quilty A teenager dies after taking a designer drug (1491645)
3.00 Through the Keyhole (9499)
3.30 Funnies (7514296) 3.35 Playdays (8353032) 3.55 Dinobirds (8361418)
4.20 Mr Wymn (1) (2847363) 4.35 Cartoon Cartoons (885257) 5.00 Newsround (1) (8261296) 5.10 Byker Grove, Last in series (1) (5150892)
5.35 Neighbours (1) (7823383)
6.00 News (1) and weather (995)
6.30 Regional News (1) (147)
7.00 Watchdog With Anne Robinson, including Richard Gadd answering questions about poor standards of service on Virgin Rail, and a "free" water-saving device that Yorkshire Water makes its customers pay for (1) (4706)
7.30 EastEnders Pauline gets a blast from the past, while Polly tries to force Tony into making a decision about their relationship. The tension mounts for Mark and Ruth (1) (401)
8.00 Birds of a Feather: The Chigwell Connection Doubt is cast over the guilt of Chris and Danny. Doris is embarrassed. With Pauline Quirke, Linda Robson and Lesley Joseph (1) (776741)
8.50 Animal Hospital Heroes With Roll Hams (1) (518708)
9.00 News (1) and weather (1215)
9.30 999 International Includes reconstructions of the plight of a helicopter whirwindmanned in the Atlantic and a mountaineer stuck in a crevasse (1) (701673)
10.20 QED: Challenging Children Insight into the work of Westminster's pioneering education unit for disruptive pupils. Devised by psychotherapists, the classes are also compulsory for parents (1) (774780)
11.15 Referendum 97 Wales Decides How Edwards presents live coverage from Cardiff as the results of the referendum on a Welsh assembly are declared. Peter Snow analyses the outcome of the day's activity of the polls with the help of his famous Welshman (9876470)
3.00am Weather (86550906)

- BBC2**
- 6.00am Open University: Renewable Energies (5722760) 6.50 Patterns in Green (5481168)
7.15 See Hear Breakfast News (1) and signing (4529585)
7.30 Smurfs' Adventures (1) (610963) 7.55 Blue Peter (1) (6956564) 8.25 Johnson and Friends (7055948) 8.30 Mouse and Mole (1) (7417588) 8.35 Teletubbies (1) (1297031) 9.00 Harry and the Hendersons (1) (2891459) 9.25 Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars (b/w) (1300321) 9.45 Rocky Star (b/w) (1882418) 9.50 Cartoon 10.00 Teletubbies (83496)
10.30 Lone Rider Rides Back (1941, b/w) Musical western with George Houston. Directed by Al St John (90321)
11.30 The Fugitive (b/w) (1) (951760) 12.00pm Complete Guide to the 20th Century (1) (8506963) 12.30 Working Lunch (75383) 1.00 Barney (7895073) 1.05 Monty (7389705) 1.10 The Craft Hour (5857332) 2.10 Consuming Passions (11403437)
2.20 Racing from Newbury Featuring the 2.40, 3.10, 3.40 and 4.10 races (5633079)
4.30 Going, Going, Gone (685031) 4.55 Esther: when a sibling dies (234942) 5.30 Today's the Day (296)
6.00 Deep Space Nine (1) (804708)
6.45 Sliders (1) (896012)
7.30 Leviathan John Cole on the 1921 negotiations between the British Government and Sinn Féin, which resulted in Ireland's partition (1) (673)
8.00 The Air Show The history of the United States Air Force, and the World Air Games in Turkey (1470) WALES: Anchors Away
8.30 Top Gear The new Peugeot 406 Coupé and the Mercedes CLK, the Frankfurt Show (1) (5556)
9.00 Third Rock from the Sun Sci-fi comedy (418334)
9.25 Horizon: Mind Over Body A look at research into alternative medicine focusing on the use of positive thinking to help to cure illnesses (1) (883031)
10.15 10x10 The tale of two obsessive climbers (478895)
10.26 Video Nation Shorts (977741)
10.30 Newsnight (1) (174925)
11.00 Newsnight (425321)
11.55 Walking on Thin Ice (962692)
12.00 Weather (2852587)
12.05am Duncun (3542277)
12.30 Learning Zone: O.U. Virtual Democracy? (47548) 1.00 Understanding Violence (37722) 1.30 Somewhere a Wall Came Down (50161) 2.00 Perfect Pictures Essentials (20180) 4.00 Teaching Languages (36635) 5.00 Get by in Italian (35069)

- BBC2**
- 6.00am GMTV (7435147)
9.25 Supermarket Sweep (1) (2881012)
9.55 Regional News (1) (1348673)
10.00 The Time, The Place (70255)
10.30 This Morning (1) (18158376)
12.20pm HTV News (6500789)
12.30 News (1) and weather (9781654)
12.55 Shortland Street (8796673) 1.25 Home and Away (1) (5842324) 1.50 Remote Control Cooking (1) (7731437) 2.20 Vanessa (1) (7658418) 2.50 The Natural Health Show (6000147)
3.20 News (1) (4037079)
3.30 Polarnus Park (1) (1786296) 3.40 Wizards (7529128) 3.50 Adventures of Dowdy (7518013) 4.00 Shogun and Cozi (285215) 4.15 Hey Arnold! (1) (4859760) 4.40 Animal Ark (1) (7456147)
5.10 A Country Practice (2605128)
5.40 News (1) and weather (978019)
6.00 Home and Away (1) (1) (846586)
6.25 HTV News (1) (215)
6.30 HTV News (1) (876)
7.30 WALES: Homeground Wales's little known historical events (499)
7.30 The Big Story Dermot Mulgahan reports on the American scheme that delivers millions by publicising (499)
8.00 The Bill A girl accuses a stage hypnotist of attempted rape (1) (5296)

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Clive James (3.30pm)

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9.25 Supermarket Sweep (1) (2881012)
9.55 Regional News (1) (1348673)
10.00 The Time, The Place (70255)
10.30 This Morning (1) (18158376)
12.20pm HTV News (6500789)
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7.30 The Big Story Dermot Mulgahan reports on the American scheme that delivers millions by publicising (499)
8.00 The Bill A girl accuses a stage hypnotist of attempted rape (1) (5296)

- CENTRAL**
- As HTV West except:
12.55pm-1.25 A Country Practice (9796673)
5.10-5.40 Shortland Street (2605128)
6.25 Central News (854505)
6.55-7.00 Lifetime (700505)
10.40 Film: The Freshman (92185383)
12.40am Planet Mith (3943703)
1.10 Rockman (5897600)
2.05 Planet Rock Profiles (3733180)
2.30 God's Gift (8181364)
4.30 Central Jobfinder '97 (4577587)
5.20 Asian Eye (1175242)
- WESTCOUNTRY**
- As HTV West except:
12.55 Home and Away (4421586)
1.20-1.50 No Place Like Home (1286465)
5.10-5.40 Home and Away (2805128)
6.00-7.00 Westcountry News (859683)
10.30 Westcountry News (859683)
10.45 All the World's a Stage (502673)
11.15 Roadrunner (505958)
11.45 Prisoner: Cell Block H (324352)
- MERIDIAN**
- As HTV West except:
5.10-5.40 Home and Away (2805128)
6.00 Meridian Tonight (963)
6.30-7.00 Big Day Out (215)
10.30 Meridian News and Weather (589683)
10.45 Film: The Wedding (29823165)
- ANGLIA**
- As HTV West except:
12.55-1.25 A Country Practice (9796673)
5.10-5.40 Shortland Street (2605128)
6.25 Anglia News (854505)
10.40 Cover Story (405186)
11.10 Streetwise (920296)
11.40 Cover Story: Special Update (963302)
12.10am Alfred Hitchcock (2151707)
- S4C**
- Starts:
7.00 The Big Breakfast (14857)
9.00 Something So Right (53673)
9.30 Film: Mother is a Freshman (4210499)
10.55 Mr Frog Went A-Courting (9077499)
11.00 The Great Outdoors (1789)
11.30 Here's One I Made Earlier (5418)
12.00 Sesame Street (73437)
12.30pm Baby Baa (32609)
1.00 Slot Melthrin (83962857)
1.15 Wil Cwac Cwac (83050012)
1.30 Mark Tully's Faces of India (77313031)
1.55 Film: Ten Gentlemen from West Point (73153470)
3.45 Exposed (1796673)
4.00 Bewitched (128)
4.30 The Feet Good Factor (352)
5.00 S Pump (7654)
5.30 Countdown (682)
6.00 Newyddion (293470)
6.15 Heno (869708)
7.00 Pobol y Cwm (867963)
7.25 Y Gylf (16012)
8.00 Y Jocs (6168)
8.30 Newyddion (5673)
9.00 Meca (214050)
9.35 Film: Ymadawd Arthur (227586)
11.25-3.00am Referendum '97 (6983760)

- CHANNEL 4**
- 5.55am Sesame Street (19499) 7.00 The Big Breakfast (14857) 9.00 Something So Right (53673)
9.30 Mother is a Freshman (19499) Lorella Young, Van Johnson and Betty Lynn A widowed mother and her daughter, attending the same college, fall for the same lecturer. Directed by Lloyd Bacon (4210499)
10.55 Mr Frog Went A-Courting Animation (9077499)
11.00 The Great Outdoors (1) (1789)
11.30 Here's One I Made Earlier Peppers and cheese salad; fish and chips with red sauce; late latin with apricots (1) (5418)
12.00 Sesame Street (73437) 12.30pm Baby Baa (32609) 1.00 Light Lunch (1) (98234)
2.00 My Wife's Relations (b/w) Buster Keaton comedy short (7584944)
2.25 The Battle of Britain (1943, b/w) A tribute to the Royal Air Force's service in London's East End during the Blitz. With Tommy Trinder, James Mason and Mervyn Johns. Directed by Basil Dearden (182334)
4.00 Bewitched (1) (128) 4.30 Countdown (1) (8850499) 4.55 Rick Lake: It's Fun to be a Freak (1) (4041370) 5.30 Absolutely Animals (3/8) (1) (992)
6.00 Boy Meets World Rites of passage comedy (1) (841128)
6.25 Fresh Pop (75437)
6.30 Hollywood Teen soap (1) (857)
7.00 Channel 4 News (1) (815234)
7.30 Get Sorted A garden path (833854)
8.00 Sultan's Sanctuary The wildlife of the Sultanate of Oman (1) (6166)
8.30 Feast (4/8) Food labelling: wild mushroom risotto; Cornish seafood (1) (5673)
9.00 Film: Home of the Gull Garry Conlon, one of the Guildford Four, tells of his experiences since prison (1) (875012)
9.45 Pond Life Candy Guard's cartoon series (1) (485925)



Clive Anderson hosts (10.00pm)

- CHANNEL 4**
- 10.00 Who Line Is It Anyway? Improvised comedy (1) (7186)
10.30 Scam (1993) starring Christopher Walken, Lorraine Bracco and Martin Donovan. A made-for-television thriller about a former FBI agent and a con artist who join forces to fool a Mafia accountant. John Flynn directs (92104418)
12.25am Midnight Special: Wales Decides Complex (20197) 1.30 The Welshman (175513) 1.55 Film: The Welshman (175513) 2.00 The Welshman (175513) 2.30 The Welshman (175513) 3.00 The Welshman (175513) 3.30 The Welshman (175513) 4.00 The Welshman (175513) 4.30 The Welshman (175513) 5.00 The Welshman (175513) 5.30 The Welshman (175513) 6.00 The Welshman (175513) 6.30 The Welshman (175513) 7.00 The Welshman (175513) 7.30 The Welshman (175513) 8.00 The Welshman (175513) 8.30 The Welshman (175513) 9.00 The Welshman (175513) 9.30 The Welshman (175513) 10.00 The Welshman (175513) 10.30 The Welshman (175513) 11.00 The Welshman (175513) 11.30 The Welshman (175513) 12.00 The Welshman (175513) 12.30 The Welshman (175513) 1.00 The Welshman (175513) 1.30 The Welshman (175513) 2.00 The Welshman (175513) 2.30 The Welshman (175513) 3.00 The Welshman (175513) 3.30 The Welshman (175513) 4.00 The Welshman (175513) 4.30 The Welshman (175513) 5.00 The Welshman (175513) 5.30 The Welshman (175513) 6.00 The 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TRIATHLON 48

London stages ultimate test of endurance

SPORT

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 18 1997

CRICKET 50

Glamorgan take high hopes to Taunton



Prost's rejection adds to world champion's woes as Walkinshaw recruits Salo

Arrows leave Hill with few options

By MICHAEL CALVIN

DAMON HILL endured a harrowing birthday yesterday when his calculated gamble on the cachet of a world championship began to unravel. Rejection by Alain Prost, in the aftermath of an announcement that Hill is to be replaced at Arrows by Mika Salo next season, threw the threat to his Formula One career into sharp focus.

Hill's only realistic option seems to be a move to Jordan, whose commercial director, Ian Phillips, stressed last night that an immediate deal was "unlikely". Their interest is in abeyance because they have until this evening to decide whether to appeal against a High Court ruling obliging them to return Giancarlo Fisichella, the outstanding young Italian driver, to Benetton.

"That is our priority," Phillips, who is likely to come under renewed pressure from Benson & Hedges, the team's principal sponsors, to recruit

Hill, said. Jordan have had no formal contact with Hill's advisers this week, although they held informal talks in Spa, Belgium, a month ago.

Hill, 37 yesterday, was travelling to Zellwag for the Austrian Grand Prix. It had been assumed that his future lay with Prost's eponymous team. A two-year deal, worth in the region of £10 million, had been discussed with Peugeot, the engine manufacturers, and Total, the fuel suppliers, but collapsed suddenly.

A curt statement issued by Prost read: "Following talks with Damon Hill the two parties have failed to come to a satisfactory agreement. Discussions have now come to a close." The unspoken accusation, that the Briton had priced himself out of a buyer's market, was obvious.

By contrast, the strains of Hill's departure from the Oxfordshire-based Arrows team were disguised by PR pieties. A statement issued by Tom

Walkinshaw, the owner, stressed that it had "been invaluable to have the world champion driving for us", but his best wishes for the future had a distinctly hollow ring.

The feeling persists that Walkinshaw, an arch pragmatist, decided to get his retaliation in first once he realised that the £5 million required to retain Hill next season could be put to better use strengthening the technical infrastructure of his team. Salo has underlined his potential in an uncompetitive Tyrrell for three seasons. His services were also available at less than half of Hill's asking price.

Walkinshaw contacted Salo's management team at 6.30am yesterday from Paris, where he was stopping en route from a business trip to Japan at which he met representatives from Bridgestone, the tyre suppliers, and Yamaha, the engine manufacturers. Their agreement, for a three-year contract involving annual option clauses, was concluded by lunchtime.

Significantly, Walkinshaw insisted that discussions with sponsors had led to the realisation that "Mika would be the most appropriate driver for us". In the doubletalk that passes as contractual negotiation, that means Hill's world title was regarded as excess baggage. The afterthought, that Pedro Diniz will help to form a "perfect partnership", was understandable, given that the Brazilian contributes £10 million to the Arrows budget in the form of personal sponsorship.

It is still difficult to believe that Hill, who has the patronage of Bernie Ecclestone, the sport's principal powerbroker, will be without a drive next season, but for someone whose popularity is based upon his humility and humanity, he has been done a grave disservice by the clumsy stewardship of his career. He has lost much of the sympathy generated by his summary



Hill faces the prospect of being without a drive next season after a harrowing day yesterday. Photograph: Marc Aspland



Salo: promise



Walkinshaw: pragmatic

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

No 1202

- ACROSS**
- 1 Wordy (7)
 - 2 Labyrinth (4)
 - 3 Impenetrable forest: Kipling Books (6)
 - 4 Worthless: petty (6)
 - 5 Trying to avoid arrest (2,3,3)
 - 6 Ship's platform, cleared for action (4)
 - 7 Acropolis temple (9)
 - 8 Relaxation: remainder (4)
 - 9 Grappling fighter (8)
 - 10 One-dimensional (6)
 - 11 Romantic cave (6)
 - 12 Focuser of light (4)
 - 13 Unerfinedness (7)
- DOWN**
- 1 Of horses (6)
 - 2 Computer error: insect (2)
 - 3 Drive: bullock (5)
 - 4 Clumsy (9)
 - 5 Swiss financial centre (6)
 - 6 Sea creature: Soapy - (R S Surtees) (6)
 - 7 Cruel (9)
 - 8 Frustrate (6)
 - 9 Give exact meaning of (6)
 - 10 Work for, group of, six (6)
 - 11 Enigma composer (5)
 - 12 Curious: unpaired (3)
- SOLUTION TO NO 1201**
- ACROSS:** 1 Algebra 5 Trod 9 Range 10 Rhombus 11 Kick upstairs 12 Goethe 13 Passed 16 Presbyterian 19 Intense 20 Abide 21 Silk 22 Kremlin
- DOWN:** 1 Aura 2 Genuine 3 Break the bank 4 Abrupt 6 Rabbi 7 Disused 8 Post Laureate 12 Gypsies 14 Spaniel 15 Streak 17 Extol 18 Mean

Gullit faces temptation to give youth its fling

By BRIAN GLANVILLE

CHELSEA won the Cup Winners' Cup in Athens in 1971, beating mighty Real Madrid in a thrilling replay. They could now win it again.

No opposition as strong as Real is in evidence this season and the Italian Cup-holders, Vicenza, have just lost their most dangerous striker, Otero, the Uruguayan, with a serious injury. Certainly, Slovan Bratislava, Chelsea's opposition in the first-round, first-leg tie at Stamford Bridge tonight, are unlikely to stand in Chelsea's way. This Bratislava team is a far cry from the one that, a few years back, pushed Aston Villa so hard in the UEFA Cup. Money, or the lack of it, is at the root of their problems.

For example, they have lost two experienced goalkeepers, Vencel and Monar, in quick succession. Konig is far less convincing and may find this a daunting occasion.

Club managers have scant security in Slovakia. This game will be watched by Karol Pecze, an accomplished manager dismissed last season by Spartak Trnava when they were pipped on the post by FC Kosice - who have just sacked their manager - for the championship.

Pecze is expected to take over from the two Bratislava incumbents, Bodnar and Moder, who have been holding the fort until now. So Pecze will probably be on the bench when Chelsea play the away leg.

Bratislava have a quick, lively attacking midfielder player in Robert Tomaschek, who interested Graham Taylor when he was managing Wolverhampton Wanderers. Milos Glonek, a powerful and

experienced international centre back, has returned after playing in France for Cuen. Up front, Stefan Maixner is his team's best hope of goals, but the truth is that Bratislava have been unable to buy.

What a contrast with Chelsea, who have virtually assembled two full teams. Knowing that the Premiership match with Arsenal awaits on Sunday, Ruud Gullit, the manager, may be inclined to give youth its fling, as he did so successfully on Saturday against Crystal Palace.

This could mean further opportunities for Mark Nicholas, 20, and Paul Hughes, 21. There might even be a place in midfield for Jody Morris, who will not turn 19 until December. Up front, Gullit is spoilt for choice. Mark Hughes and Tore Andre Flo, of Norway, played against Palace. Flo could get another run, but it might be politic to rest the veteran Hughes. Gianluca Vialli has a thigh strain; Torino, coached by Graeme Souness, are said to have renewed their interest in him.

His two fellow Italy internationals, Roberto Di Matteo and Gianfranco Zola, who also missed the game at Palace, will be important against Arsenal. It will be surprising to see either given a full game tonight.

All in all, Chelsea's most serious problem could be over-confidence. An early goal might tempt them to sit back and see the game as won. In that respect, the use of young players eager to prove themselves would make sound sense. Of these, Danny Granville could return in place of the suspended Graeme Le Saux. Frank Sinclair is also suspended.

Bratislava have already knocked out Levski Sofia, drawing the first game, winning the second. Those who play for Chelsea against Bratislava and Arsenal will have fewer than three days to recover. Against that, Arsenal, who played on Tuesday, must recuperate from a long trip and a hard game and they do not have Chelsea's extravagant resources.



Vialli, left, who is injured, and Zola may be missing tonight

Fifa ranks England above Italy

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

IT MIGHT count for little in the heat of Rome on October 11, when England and Italy meet in their deciding group two World Cup qualifying match, but England are now five places above Italy in the latest rankings of Fifa, football's world governing body.

Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, guided his side to a 4-0 victory against Moldova at Wembley last week, which was enough to retain seventh position in the rankings, with 60.70 points. However, Italy's 0-0 draw in Georgia, plus the recent improvement of Argentina and Norway, has seen Cesare Maldini's team slip to twelfth place, on 58.92 points.

Brazil, the world champions, are still first in the rankings, with Germany having moved up to second place. Romania, the only country with a 100 per cent record in the European qualifying series for the 1998 World Cup finals, are third.

On the same day as the group two gladiators meet in Rome, Scotland need to beat Latvia in group four to probably reach the finals in France as the best European runners-up. Craig Brown, the Scotland coach, will not be too perturbed to discover that his bravehearts have dropped one place, to 27th.

Ireland, after victories in Iceland and Lithuania, have climbed 13 places to 42nd. Northern Ireland have slipped one place to 72nd, but Wales are in freefall, down 18 places this year to 98th.

WORLD RANKINGS: 1 Brazil 72.24; 2 Germany 63.36; 3 Romania 62.65; 4 Holland 62.06; 5 Denmark 61.60; 6 Spain 61.15; 7 England 60.70; 8 Norway 60.51; 9 Colombia 60.05; 10 Argentina 59.13; Other: 27 Scotland 54.10; 42 Ireland 48.35; 72 Northern Ireland 38.43; 98 Wales 30.73

Z-O-L-A

Chelsea vs Slovan Bratislava
live from 7:30 tonight.

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Protests force BBC to shelve changes